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WESTERN AMERICANA

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ON THE PLAINS IN '65.

—BY—

GEO. H. HOLLIDAY;

Late Serg't. Co. G., Sixth W. Va. Vet. Vol. Cavalry.

Twelve Months in the Volunteer Cavalry Service, among the Indians of Nebraska, Colorado, Dakota, Wyoming and Montana.

"Then we started. Full pelt up the [illegible] we went."

Thrilling Adventures, Fine Scenery, and How the Boys Put in the Time in the Far West.

DEDICATED TO THE

Grand Army Republic

BY THE AUTHOR.

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PREFACE.

The author of this work enlisted at the age of *fifteen years*, and served through the war of the Rebellion. At the close of the war his regiment, with a few other volunteer regiments, was ordered to the Rocky Mountains to assist in protecting the frontier, guarding the overland stage line,, running the mails through to the remote Northwest, and in protecting the Government posts along the North Platte river. During the winter of 1865 he was severely frozen while in active service in Wyoming, from which he has never recovered. He trusts that his little book will be read with interest by the old vets, of the late war, for whom he entertains in his heart a sincere love, which increases with his declining years.

Yours in F. C. L.,
THE AUTHOR.

YOURS
IN
F.C.L.
SERGT.
HOLLIDAY.

"Back to the States."

CHAPTER I.

Westward Ho!---After Lee's Surrender---Troops en Route for the Plains---A Glance Backward---A Fearful Collision---An Ex-Rebel Captain the Cause---All our Horses Thrown from a High Trestle Work---A Large Number of Soldiers Killed.

Time passes rapidly by, and we are whirled on, on, passing milestone after milestone, until a greater part of the journey of life is passed. We look ahead, not heeding the stations as they are passed, until we are appalled at the irresistible speed at which we have been driven.

And now we attempt to review the journey, casting longing glances back over the road which fate has compelled us to travel. We count a score of milestones—yes, forty, sixty, it may be three score and ten—and we are warned that we are about to enter the Great Union Depot—the end of the journey of life.

As I sit down to write, my mind involuntarily wanders back to the dark days of the war for the Union. I review again the army of the Potomac. I seem to hear the tramp, tramp, tramp of tired feet. I hear again the iron hoofs of a legion of war horses, as they tread all through the long night over the stony street. I hear again the sound of musketry and the roar of battle. I see the smoke spreading over the battle field like a funeral veil. Then again I seem to hear the groans and sighs of wounded and dying men. I see them borne from the fatal field by tender hands. I hear their piteous prayers for mercy as they pass, mingled with the endearing words of mother, sister, and of loved ones at home.

But now look! See, the battle is on! There they charge; on, on—now they are checked by a volley, only for one instant; their ranks are thinned. But no matter, on they charge, into the very jaws of death. Now the rebel lines are broken—they flee. The battle is ours. The air is rent with the shout of victory.

No pen can describe, no tongue can tell it. But now, after a lapse of fifteen years, in the far off distance, I seem to hear the dying echoes of the roar and din of a dozen battles. Again I recount hair-breadth escapes, long dreary marches by day and by night. Privations and hardships that can never be told. Camping at night in dense snow storms or drenching rains, with nothing but the canopy of heaven as a shelter.

Then again I cross deep streams filled with floating ice, until the chilling waters reach the back of my tired and jaded horse.

In short, the scenes and privations, the bitter and sweet of over three years in the saddle, passed before my mind as though it were a dream of last night, or a tale that were told.

And now as I sit at my own fireside, surrounded by a loving wife and little children, I can scarcely realize that seventeen years have passed since then, and that I, who now love so well the quiet and peace of my own family circle, am the same boy of seventeen years ago—then so reckless of life, with nothing to care for—save my own country.

Passing thus hastily over an experience which would make material for a volume of interesting reading, and one such as almost any soldier could furnish, I come to the final end of the Rebellion.

The battle is fought and won. and now the boys, with glad hearts and proud spirits, are returning home. A great assemblage of the victorious armies is ordered to take place at Washington. For three long days brigade after brigade, division after division, corps after corps, marched down Pennsylvania avenue by platoons, passing the White House, where they were reviewed by President Johnson and Cabinet, and all the foreign ministers then in the United States.

This "Grand Review" was one of the most magnificent spectacles ever seen in the world, and will always have a reserved seat in my memory as the grandest scene of my life.

My regiment was the Sixth West Virginia Veteran Cavalry, formerly the old Second and Third West Virginia Mounted Infantry. A large proportion of this regiment had enlisted at the "first call" and had "seen her through," as they expressed it. And when it became known that we were ordered across the plains to assist in squashing the hostile tribes of Indians then on the war path in Dakota, Wyoming and Montana, instead of being mustered out as were hundreds of regiments whose service had not been half so long and hard as ours, the wrath and indignation of some of the older men, who had family ties at home, knew no bounds. But with many of us younger boys the news was received with demonstrations of joy.

Visions of "scalps," wild "ponies," "buffalos," and love among the little "squaws"—perhaps marriage among some of the dusky daughters of the Rocky Mountains. And then fighting Indians would be child's play compared with the stern realities of war through which we had just passed. All these and many other pious thoughts filled our young minds until we really feared that the protests of the older members of the regiment might prevail and the order be countermanded.

Leaving Washington City about the 18th of June, 1865, with all our horses and equipments of war packed into a train of box and hog cars, via. the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, we found ourselves in full sail for the Great West, to engage in a new kind of warfare.

After being a few hours on the road we began to notice fresh signs of devastation and general ruin in many of the little and some of the large towns through which we passed.

"I'll bet my life," said one of the boys, "that a New York regiment has passed over this road within the past few days." Whisky shops were gutted, groceries and peanut stands were riddled, and in fact everything presented the appearance of having passed through a hurricane, or perhaps been shaken by an earthquake.

Our train stopped at Grafton, where the storm seemed to have struck its hardest blow, and we asked a dejected looking man, who seemed to have forcibly retired from business, the cause of all the smashed up stores. "Don't ye know? Why, the Twenty-first New York Cavalry stopped here about fifteen minutes yesterday, and here it is. It shows for itself. But I reckon the Government will make it all right."

And our train moved out, leaving the broken merchant cussing all soldiers in general and New York troops in particular. So then we learned for the first time that this "bummer" regiment was before us, and that they, too, were en route for the plains. This was not cheering news for the boys, for we had a great contempt for this regiment, whose subsequent history I will detail further on.

The summer of 1864, '5 and '6 marked a period of unusual peril to the daring pioneers seeking homes in the Far West. Following upon the horrible massacres in Minnesota in 1863, and the subsequent chastisements inflicted by the expeditions under Generals Sibley and Sulleb in 1864, whereby the Indians were driven from the then western borders of civilization in Iowa and Minnesota, and the white settlements of Dakota, in the Missouri Valley, the great emigrant trails to Idaho and Montana became the scenes of fresh outrages, and from the wild and almost inaccessible nature of the country, pursuit and punishment was almost impossible.

Then the Government had been sorely taxed in her efforts to put down the Rebellion, and the red men of the plains had had their own way to a great extent. But now the war in the South had come to an end, and Uncle Sam turned his attention to the wild boys of the West, who had been so unruly while the "Great Father" was chastizing his subjects in the South.

Little did any of the four hundred men who composed all that was left of that once proud and magnificent regiment think of the hardships and perils that were in store for them in the land of the setting sun. Many who were of that little regiment died of scurvy, others were frozen to death in the mountains, while others were killed and their scalps now ornament the walls of the "tepe" of the noble red man.

But we go back to Parkersburg. Here we unshipped our stiff and hungry horses from their railroad prison, as we had done many times before. We crossed the Ohio and many of us were in our native State, for the first time for many months.

What a difference we found in the hospitality of Virginia and Ohio people! Talk of your boasted Virginia hospitality! Perhaps Virginia had, had her stomach overloaded with troops, and the burden had made her sick of them. Be that as it may, we met with the very kindest of treatment all along the line of the M. and C. R. R., notwithstanding the aforesaid New York bummers had passed over the road just ahead of us, and had grossly insulted and mistreated the good people, who mistook them for a part of the Army of the Potomac, and wanted to treat them kindly.

At many of the towns along the road our train was stopped, where great kettles of hot coffee and bean soup until you couldn't rest (never turn a cold shoulder on bean soup, boys,) had been prepared, and thousands of pies and cords of ginger bread were lying in reserve for us. Our stomachs being entire strangers to the latter, we found some trouble in introducing the rich strangers, and more trouble in maintaining the new acquaintances. At any rate, some of the boys became, as they declared, "sea sick," while others asserted that in their "honest opinion they had been pizened by Buckeyes." But I think now that the facts in the case were that pine top whisky, bean soup, coffee, dried apple pies and ginger bread, thoroughly stirred up by the motion of the cars over a rough road, was a combination of delicacies never intended by nature to lay tranquilly on the craw of even a soldier. And unless that railroad company used those cars immediately after we vacated them for shipping hogs, they certainly lost money in that transportation of troops.

At Cincinnati we were joined by the Third Massachusetts Cavalry, Fourteenth Pennsylvania Cavalry, and Twenty-first New York Cavalry, all destined for the seat of the Indian hostilities in the West, and under Major General Frank Wheaton.

A night parade through the streets of the Queen City, then a camp during the remainder of the night on the streets, and next morning we were loaded into three trains bound for St. Louis via. the Ohio and Mississippi Railroad.

Had not a dreadful collision occurred near Carlisle, Ill., in which we lost several men and nearly all our horses, the trip would not be worth noticing. Reader, have you ever witnessed a collision of railroad trains loaded with soldiers and all their munitions of war, together with several hundred horses? If not, don't pine for the spectacle. It is one of those things which it is easier to imagine than look upon.

Collins Station is a little village on the O. and M. R. R., and is situate three miles east of Carlisle, a thriving town on the same road.

It was eleven o'clock at night when our train halted at Collins Station to await orders. We were an extra train and running "out of time." The order soon came to run down to Carlisle and pass an east bound train lying on the switch.

About the same moment the conductor of the east bound train received an order to wait on the siding until our train would pass. He was told by the operator who gave him the order that the west bound train was loaded with "Yankee troops."

This conductor had but a few months before held a commission as captain in a Missouri rebel regiment, and of course still held a grudge against the men who had borne a part in wiping out his little Southern Confederacy. In fact, his treacherous heart yearned for revenge.

Here was such an opportunity as would never be afforded again. Stepping down to his engineer, he ordered him to run with all speed up to Collins Station, where he would pass an extra freight on the siding.

Immediately his train moved on to the main track, making all speed for Collins Station. So it will be seen that the two trains left the two stations about the same moment, each engineer thinking that he is to make good time, and that the other is waiting for him to pass.

Half-way between the towns is a trestle work a half-mile in length across a vast swamp. On this the collision occurred.

But I can better describe the scene by my own observation and personal experience. It was now midnight, and dark as Egypt. Nearly every man on our train was in the "land of repose." We were in box cars. Behind the train was a passenger coach, in which the officers were stored. My company occupied the third car from the rear. The next car in advance of ours was filled with two companies. Then there were eight or ten cars immediately behind the engine filled with horses and equipage.

I had taken off my boots and made a pillow of them. We were "sardined" upon the floor of that car as compactly as was possible. No man could turn over without the consent of the whole squad, and then the order "right spoon" or "left spoon" had first to be given, so that all turn at once, when a general flopping over followed, not, however, without a good deal of "cussing" by those who had to be "waked" in order to successfully execute the command.

Suddenly the shrill scream of a whistle is heard, then another—only two—in close succession. Then a terrific shock—a crash—a crash—then a dead halt. The very earth seems to quake and tremble. In an instant we are rushing to and fro in wild confusion. Nothing can be seen. Presently a side door is pushed open and a man leaps out into the darkness—down, down, he falls, sixty feet, into the marsh and among the logs that lie beneath us.

One glance out, and we see fire falling from the engine, and realize at a glance that we are upon a high bridge. The door is closed immediately. Now the hissing of steam, the dying groans and prayers of wounded and mangled men, the struggles and hard breathing of hundreds of horses are borne to our ears, and we begin to realize that a terrible accident has occurred.

Now the sound of voices is audible. Those who have escaped unhurt begin to cast about for some means of escape. The alarming fact that we were upon a high trestle was communicated one to another. Then the cry was raised that the bridge and wreck were on fire, and that the bridge would soon fall. This caused a stampede, and several men were hurt in the rush that followed. Every man on that bridge fully believed that the whole mass would go down together before we could possibly escape.

For the first time since the battle of Winchester I tried with all my heart to feel religious. But I found that my desire to reach the "shore" at the east end of the bridge far out-weighed my longing to plant my feet firmly upon the shore of that "bourne from which no traveler ever does get back." Perhaps it was because I realized that I was much nearer the earth than the heavenly land.

But while I was preparing to meet the end, which I thought would

"A Crash. Then a Dead Halt.

soon come, some of the boys seized their carbines, and with the butt ends commenced to smash in the end of the car. Soon a hole appeared, and in a twinkling the end of that car was demolished, and we were climbing to the roof. Running to the rear of the train we found several hundred men upon the top and inside the officers' car. Here a dim lamp was procured, and by its light we commenced an extremely perilous trip back over the trestle work, not knowing how far or when the land would be reached.

Such a spectacle was never seen before nor since. In fact, it was too dark to be seen on that night. There were nearly four hundred of us—a general, colonel, lieutenant-colonel, two majors, several captains and lieutenants—all together, astraddle of the two rails "crawfishing" it, for none dared to attempt to walk the ties in the darkness.

To add to our already embarrassing situation, a sudden gust of wind put an end to our light, and we found that we were in for the rest of the journey aided only by instinct. It was an hour of intense horror, which no pen can portray, no tongue can tell.

This all occurred in less time than I could write two lines of this narrative.

We had proceeded in this way nearly a quarter of a mile, making as rapid strides as possible, when the advance sent back the glad tidings that land had been discovered, and soon we stepped with weak one by one, upon terra firma, with a fervent "thank God" for our safe delivery.

Now our thoughts are wholly turned upon the work before us of rescuing our unfortunate comrades. We now stand upon a high fill and cast our eyes in the direction of the wreck and try to scan the situation.

Our hearts are melted by the sounds which arise from the debris away down in the swamp below us. A bright light flashes up near the engines and reveals the surroundings. It is the beacon light to guide us to the rescue. Then a voice is heard: "Help! help! in God's name, help! The bridge is on fire!"

The burning embers fall down, down until the wreck beneath is ignited and a lurid light illuminates the terrible scene. We are now able to see our way, and we hasten down the embankment and are soon among the debris assisting the living and removing the dead. I remembered the man who jumped from the car when the collision occurred, and by the aid of a torch light we found him, in a half-stooping posiition—dead. He was a Sergeant by the name of Ashburn.

In an hour after the accident the towns of Carlysle and Collins Station, and all the surrounding neighborhood, were depopulated and the people massed at the scene of the disaster. Such a throng of people had never before been gathered together in that section of the country, especially at midnight.

By the aid of a thousand willing hands, the flames were soon extinguished, the wounded cared for, and the dead gathered up.

The cry for help which had been heard came from the engineer of our train. His legs were securely fastened between the tender and boiler, which had been jammed together, and by the light of the slowly burning bridge his pallid face could plainly be seen hanging from the cab window, and his now faint voice could be heard pleading for assistance. It was more than any man could stand, and several of the boys attempted to climb to him at the risk of their own lives, for it was thought that the whole structure would fall before morning.

After repeated efforts one of our men reached, and made every effort to release him, but, alas! to no purpose. He died while giving a message to be delivered to his young wife and child, and his white face dropped and hung lifeless by the window of his engine.

The fireman's body had been severed, and his lower limbs and part of his body hung beneath the bridge by his suspenders—a ghastly sight for his wife to look upon when she arrived by special train from St. Louis the next morning.

Underneath the trestle, on either side, were vast heaps of dead and crippled horses, together with the debris of eight cars which had conveyed them to the scene of their death. Fortunately for us the horse cars were in advance, and of course saved us from total destruction.

A forage car containing corn and hay and a half dozen men had gone with the wreck. These men were all killed. The two engines seemed to have almost buried themselves in each other, while the rear cars of both trains were still upon the track.

An enterprising photographer was early upon the spot, and photographed the wreck and sold about one thousand pictures at fifty cents each, as we aftewards learned.

Upon the trestle near our engine lay a few dead horses, upon which the bottom of a car securely rested. The sides had fallen from this car, dragging with them all the horses it contained—save one There he stood like a marble statue This horse belonged to a Sergeant Cabel, who called him "Garibadi." Everybody knew this horse, and respected him for his noble qualities. Cabel loved him and was loved in turn by "Garibaldi."

The old mustang had carried his master through two years of hardship, and was never known to flicker, and could live as long on wind and go as far in a week as any horse in the army of the Potomac. He had stood by his master in many tight places—waiting patiently in a fence corner for hours for his wayward master to get sober, on more than one occasion—and now, could Cabel desert him? Not much! He would listen to none of the propositions suggested "to put the horse out of his misery;" but hastened to Carlysle and soon returned with block and tackle, and by the aid of hundreds of volunteers, the old pony was lowered to the ground amidst the deafening shouts of eight thousand sympathetic souls. This old mustang has a further history, which I will relate further on.

The wounded men were kindly taken care of by the good people of Carlysle, as indeed were all who wished to avail themselves of the proffered hospitality. Engines were soon brought from Cincinnati and St. Louis, and by night the track was cleared. Out of the thirty-three horses in my company but one remained—"Garibaldi."

Of course you ask what became of the rebel captain. I can't tell you. For a whole day we searched the woods and every corner in the town, but could gain no clew. One thing was evident, he never got on his train after giving his engineer his orders. Had we found him, his carcass would have dangled in the air beneath that fatal bridge.

Leaving our wounded to the tender care of the good people, and after burying our dead in sorrow, we embarked on another train for St. Louis.

CHAPTER II.

Up the Turbid Missouri--Ten Days Exposed to a Drenching Rain--The Boat is Snagged, and the Boys Jump Overboard--Musing Upon the Past--The Boys Stampede a Herd of Cattle and Run Them Into a Circus--Great Excitement, in Which the Cash Box is Missing--The Twenty-first New York Move, but the Sixth West Virginia Disobey the Order,

At St. Louis we embarked on an old hulk of a steamer destined for the Missouri river, and thence to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas—our starting point over the plains to the mountains—a distance of twelve hundred miles.

A voyage up the Missouri River is a fine thing to contemplate, but altogether a different thing to experience.

I had made the trip with a company of emigrants seven years before—when but a mere boy—a part of the way on the deck of the old "William Russell," and I still held some unpleasant recollections of muddy water, sand bars and snags, and the sinking of our steamer in six inches of water, and of waiting six long days for a boat to come to our assistance

I have waded through many years of untold hardships, but I now think that this second trip up the turbid Missouri was the most uncomfortable soldiering we had ever experienced. The boat was literally packed from stem to stern with troops and horses, there being a part of several regiments on board. My company, with several others, were quartered on the hurricane deck. The first several days the rain came down upon us in torrents. For shelter we pitched our tents all over the roof. But they afforded but poor protection, as we could not "ditch" around them, and the water ran under us and was taken up by our heavy blankets.

To add to our discomfort a cyclone struck us one cold, wet night, and tore the last vestige of our tents from their fastenings and carried them into the surging muddy water. From that time until we reached

Kansas City we were drenched and soaked, and many of the boys for the first time in many months, had their uniforms washed.

To add to all this, we had but one stove—an old sheet iron thing—upon which two or three hundred men had to do their cooking. For eight or ten days and nights this was covered with cups and camp kettles. It was against the rules to fry meat—that could be eaten raw; but coffee must be cooked.

It was delicious coffee. It looked rich and good, having the appearance of being well "creamed;" but after drinking a few quarts it was positively necessary to take a chew of tobacco in order to kill the bad taste.

The day we passed Kansas City the storm "let up," and the glorious sun came out warm and beautiful—a most beautiful sight. Then such a drying of clothes and blankets! That boat looked like a huge "junk boat," with all the old rags in creation. It was a sight to make even a Chinaman blush. Every available hog chain, as high as a pike pole could reach, was turned into a clothes line. All the railings, and even the pilot house, were brought into requisition, and the boys took turns at holding their blankets around the smoke stack. They made hay while the sun shone.

It was a day of thanksgiving for the festive grayback. They, too, were warmed into new life, and marshaled their innumerable hosts on the sunny side of the blankets and old shirts, and basked in the warm sunshine, gathering strength for the next onslaught.

The night following was clear and pleasant. We had all "spooned", down together, and were making up for lost time at a splendid rate, when a crash and ringing of bells below awoke us rather abruptly. In and instant all was uproar and confusion, in which a few men fell overboard.

"The boat is wrecked!" "Boys, she is bound to sink!" "Grab a root!" "Sink or swim!" and many other expressions could be heard as the mass of excited men rushed to and fro in the darkness.

Some one ordered the horses to be cut loose and shoved overboard. Amidst the confusion I, with many others, had clambered over the guard rails and down the sides of the boat to the lower deck, which became so densely packed that many were shoved into the water.

Then over went a horse, then another, until a half a dozen or more were in the river. Then the bass voice of a man arose from out of the depths of the muddy waters, and could be heard above the din and confusion:

"What in the —— are you doing there? Don't launch any more horses over here. *'Taint a foot deep!*"

In a little while our old comrade Cahall was hauled on board, with all the others who had fallen into the water. No one was hurt. Quiet was soon restored, and what at first seemed to be a dreadful accident became a good joke, especially on those who had been "ducked."

An inspection of the boat revealed the fact that she lay on a sandbar with a large snag running through her larboard wheel-house, which had completely demolished the cooking department.

Just aft of the wheel-house were several horses. One of these had been caught by a prong of the snag in its ascent, and was found standing on his hind feet with his head up in the hole made in the floor of the cabin by the snag. On cutting his halter, he dropped "right side up with care," and reveaved himself to be old "Garabaldi." He had made another narrow escape, and thus increased in value (in the estimation of his master) to "one thousand dollars."

Morning dawned, the snag was removed, and in the meantime some of the men went ashore in search of their stock, which was soon found quietly grazing on the rich Kansas grass.

The next day we disembarked at Fort Leavenworth, and I, with suppressed emotional feelings, realized that I once more stood upon the dear soil of my boyhood days—the soil which contained the remains of a dear mother.

I had formed a wild love for Kansas in early youth, when the Kaw, Pottowottomy and other half-wild Indians lived along the wooded banks of the Kansas river. Four years of boyish life filled with sports and wild excitements had been spent here, which now seemed like a dream of long ago.

Who does not like the scenes of his youth? Where is the man so happy and contented that he would not gladly go back to boyhood days and live that life over again?

All through the long journey across the "States" I had been musing upon this early life. Scenes and incidents were recalled. Famillar forms and happy faces constantly flitted before me, recalling many happy days spent in that land which I was again soon to reach.

In my imagination I again sat upon the banks of the Kaw and cast my hook into the stream. Again I drew it up to put on a fresh "bait," to renew my efforts to catch the fish which I never caught. Again I saw the long single file of half-clad Indians as they forded the stream. Then I seemed to again see them plucking the blushing blue grapes and filling their rude baskets, for which they expected to obtain a *necia aspiu*.

But now, after landing, how changed the scene! True, I was yet a long way from my old home, but things and places which I had known so well at Leavenworth had all changed—or perhaus I had changed. However it was, I felt a melancholy similar to that of Enoch Arden when he returned to his old home after an absence of ten years, and found his wife the wife of another.

I wished again that I might go over across the country to the banks of the Wakarusha and watch the endless string of wagons containing emigrants and provisions for the forts and country beyond the Rocky Mountains. I remembered how in my boyish love of the wild and romantic, I had envied the wagon master, his mule and Mexican saddle, and long heavy whip, and large gingling spurs. But all this had passed, and I tried in vain to forget the past and make the best of the present.

But I have unintentionally drifted into this channel, and will now take the reader back to the camp at Leavenworth. I am anxious to get onto the plains with those who will follow me, but we must not leave Fort Leavenworth without telling of the mutiny which occurred here.

I fain would pass over this unfortunate occurrence, for it is not a very pleasant reflection to remember that a regiment that had served through nearly five years without a spot or blemish to tarnish a hard earned fame should engage in mutiny. But the circumstances which occasioned it were ample excuse for those who participated.

Our first order after getting settled in camp was to "turn over" our American horses and "draw" ponies. The turning over process was a light job for us. Our horses had been "turned over" (the bridge) at Carlyle. But the "drawing" was a hard job. The corral, about thirty acres in extent, contained about one thousand "bronchos." Some were good; some were not so good. They had, many of them, been captured or confiscated from the hostile Indians on the plains, and as a result were not accustomed to the ways and manners of the pale face. They had to be caught with a "lasso."

Indian ponies were better calculated for the use of cavalry on the plains than "Americano" horses. His powers of endurance were truly wonderful. I never knew a pony to give out. He can travel a greater distance and carry a load in a day, or week, or all the time, for that matter, and do it on less rations than any other living animal.

We saw some little scrawny rats out on the plains which had been in the mail service for years and seemed to grow fat on it. During the spring, summer and fall they receive no grain at all, but subsist on grass and wind.

A few days after our arrival we went over to the corral to pick from the herd. Catching them proved to be fine sport, especially to the "bullwhackers" and "cowboys" who lounged around and watched our awkward efforts at throwing the lariette.

But a half-breed Indian who had charge of the stock, came to the rescue on an old split-eared pony which seemed to take especial delight in chasing and capturing his wild country cousins. He was brought up in the lasso business and knew just when to rush in and the exact moment to sit down and choke the pesky rascal at the other end of the rope.

By night we had secured enough ponies, and we returned to camp.

After exchanging our old trusty carbines for seven shooter (Spencer) carbines, and adding a forty foot picket rope and iron pin to our equipage, we were again ready for business.

Each regiment had assigned for its use a mule train of twenty-seven wagons, six mules to the wagon. These were for the transportation of rations, tents and tools, and material for the construction of block houses and stockades, together with a supply of forage for mules and ponies.

During our short encampment here we were joined by the 1st and 6th Michigan Cavalry. While lying in camp and making preparations for a long march and hard winter, an incident occurred which I must relate to show how naughty the boys acted on certain occasions. Then I will give an account of the mutiny.

A circus show landed at Leavenworth city, and after giving an exhibition there, came up to the fort. It proved to be an unlucky place for that show. Our men had not been paid off for some months, and of course were all "strapped;" but the pay rolls had been signed, and we were to be paid on the day following.

A delegation of the boys in camp waited upon the manager and asked him to defer until the next day. But he could not—was billed for points above, and must go on.

The boys determined to have all the fun possible out of the thing, and play a part not on the programme. The menagerie part of the show was a very lame affair, inasmuch as an old lame elephant and a "happy family" composed all that feature of the show.

Night came on, and the band played "Johnny Come Marching Home," and "The Girl I Left Behind Me," and a large crowd of moneyless men gathered upon the outside of the canvas. Presently some one plucked me out to one side and pointed to a large slit in the canvas. It was enough; we had been there before. Following my venturesome guide, we were soon under the seats, and patiently waiting for the clown to make his appearance.

We had not been enlightened as to what was going on just down the road a mile distant; hence we felt serene and happy. The show commenced. The "grand entry" was just over, when the clown made his appearance with the usual jokes. But suddenly he stops short and seemed to have lost his place.

The ground trembles, and there is a sound as of distant thunder. Now it comes nearer and nearer. Every face is blanched and every heart stands still. The showmen look each other in the face, but not a word escapes the lips of anyone. The old elephant lashes the ground with his trunk, and tries to break his chains. The "happy family" all at once stir up a regular family row, and in an intant monkey, cats, dogs, snakes, &c., are engaged in a dreadful deadly fight. Now the entire audience loses their balance and commence to jostle each other about.

All at once the seats come down with a crash. It was a moment of intense horror. But only for a moment. Now the ground seems to shake with greater violence; the crowd outside are runing to and fro; the strange and awful sound increases. And all at once the truth dawned upon us, and the shout goes up, "stampede! stampede!" This intensified the horror.

I had seen stampedes before, and for an instant I felt my head reel and my senses leave me—only for an instant, and then I saw stars. The canvas was gone, and we lay in heaps upon the ground. Such a scene cannot be described, or even imagined. The whole occurrence took place in one minute.

The tent was dragged for some distance, taking in its folds horses, men in striped suits, wagons, seats, and carrying them for some distance. Then it was dropped, and the frightened herd of cattle, horses, mules, ponies, &c., with the old elephant bringing up the rear, dragging his heavy chain attached to one fore foot—all went pell mell down the plain toward the city. This chain with a large post at its end, was a dreadful weapon in the hand of an elephant, and many were the Mexican steers and Indian ponies which came within its deadly sweep.

I regret to say that the ticket office was upset and robbed of several hundred dollars, although this was likely done by those who had nothing to do with the stampede.

Several days were consumed in gathering up the stock belonging to the show, in which search we all joined. With the exception of some broken limbs and many bruises, no more bodily harm occurred, although it was regarded as miraculous that we were not all killed.

The cattle which stampeded belonged to a freight train in camp near the fort, and destined for Fort Union, New Mexico. They were started by the use of buffalo robes thrown over two or three mounted men, who rushed into the herd.

In justice to the officers in command it is well to state that they made an effort to bring the guilty parties to punishment, but they could not be found, and the enraged showmen left Fort Leavenworth swearing eternal vengeance on all the troops at that place. The showmen made capital out of the thing though, for they went from place to place telling that they had lost three elephants, four lions, and all their camels and dromedaries in that stampede.

The next day after the show several regiments, including the Sixth West Virginia cavalry were paid off. This proved to be a blunder, as the sequel will show.

It will be remembered that the 6th West Virginia, 3d Massachusetts, 14th Pennsylvania, 21st New York and the 1st and 6th Michigan—all cavalry regiments—were in camp at this time at Fort Leavenworth, with marching orders for the plains and Rocky mountains, in the territories of Nebraska, Colorado, Dakota, Wyoming, Utah and Montana.

It was intended that all these regiments should march through as far as Fort Kearney, Nebraska, together. It was evident that General Wheaton was contemplating trouble, and that the whole command would refuse to move. In fact it soon became a fixed fact, and was publicly talked of by the troops and understood by the officers that the order would not be obeyed. Then it leaked out that secret meetings were being held nightly by some of the regiments. I had attended none of these meetings up to this time, but one evening a Sergeant came through camp giving notice that every man would be expected to meet in the woods, a few hundred yards distant, that night at ten o'clock.

Some time after dark the camp became thinned out, until but few of us remained. As for myself I had determined to take no stock in the proceedings or its results, but had made up my mind to follow Col. R. E. Fleming, my commanding officer, wherever he ordered to go.

However, with a view to finding out just what grounds the boys had for engaging in a mutiny, I sauntered out to the place of rendezvous. Here I found a large delegation from all the commands. The little Sergeant, whose name I do not remember, called the meeting to order. He was the same who had given notice of the meeting. He proceeded to set forth in flaunting tones the many reasons why we should not be sent out over the plains.

First, many of the men had enlisted at the breaking out of the war; had served three months, then three years, then re-enlisted again for three years, or "during the war." Peace had been declared, the war was over, and we should be mustered out.

Then again, he argued that we had not enlisted to fight Indians, and that our service was to be in the United States and not in the territories. He then closed by asserting that we were ordered West by misrepresentation of our officers to the War Department; that the department had been led to believe that we were anxious to go West, and did not want to be discharged.

His speech had the desired effect, and before the meeting closed a mutual understanding was effected, and a positive agreement made that not a man should move.

In justice to a large number of the young men of my regiment, myself included, I will say that we declined to take any part in the meeting, but determined to obey orders right or wrong.

Of course our commander knew of these resolutions and the agreement, and as a result we were put under the strictest discipline. Camp guards were put on, and no one allowed to go outside the lines without a pass.

No whiskey was allowed in camp. At least such were the orders; but I saw tricks resorted to by the 21st New York Cavalry which I never saw before, although we were well versed in smuggling whisky. Rabbits were plentiful down the river, and passes were given the men occasionally to go rabbit hunting. When they returned their pockets were always searched by the camp guard for the ardent, and of course never found. Into camp they would march, with guns at a "right shoulder shift," muzzle pointing up. Then into the little tents, and the gun was passed around, each one taking a pull at the muzzle, and many of them got more than "half shot" and sometimes badly wounded, who never heard the crack of a gun in the hands of a rebel.

Another device was to go to the river to wash blankets. After washing, go to a neighboring saloon, buy a gallon, put it in a bucket, put the blanket in the bucket also, and souse it up and down until all the precious fluid is absorbed, then rush off for the camp, and once in camp wring it out into a camp kettle, and all get drunk. It is strange how often some of the blankets had to be washed, and how hard these New York bummers would work at the wringing process. I have seen a blanket literally twisted to pieces in the effort to squeeze "one more drop" out of the woolly thing. It was some time before the officers could find out how these men got liquor into camp.

One day a very respectable looking Irish girl came into camp with a basket of cakes and dyspeptic looking pies to sell to the boys. She was searched by the guard and allowed to pass in.

After selling out her little "blind," as she afterwards termed it, she sat down in a large Sibley tent. As she dropped onto the stool a jingling kind of sound was heard, and the boys in the tent at once took the hint. She sat for some time watching a game of cards, and occasionally offered some valuable hints as how certain cards should be played.

Finally one of the boys ventured to suggest that if he could only get a little something to clear up his mind he might be able to play his cards better.

"I've got a wee drop of the critter by me now, boys; which ov ye want to pay me fur me trouble? ye can have fur the asken."

"I'll take that trick right now," said one of the boys, as he went down in his pocket after the script. "Where have you the liquor, me love?"

"It's underneath me dress, bedad; tied to me hoop skirt," and as she spoke she very modestly lifted her dress to an immodest height and revealed several bottles and canteens dangling from her hoop skirt, like gourds from a vine in autumn.

The game of poker lost its interest, and a dozen or more thirsty topers gathered around that traveling grog-shop, and in ten minutes she had relieved her clothes of their ponderous weight and was on her way to the city with twenty-five or more dollars in her pocket. Of course there was a dangerous drunk in camp that night, and the officers wondered "where under the sun those men got their whisky."

But the crisis came. The 21st New York was ordered to march on the morning of the day following. It was seen by this movement that a new programme had been arranged, and that no two regiments would be ordered out together. To the surprise of every one this regiment moved exactly at the time designated, without one exception. This was a damper on the other portion of the command. They had been so loud in their declarations of constancy, and had made such solemn pledges, that this action was looked upon as a contemptible breach of faith.

Next morning came orders for the 6th West Virginia to move at daybreak on the succeeding morning. Of course the action of this regiment was watched with great interest by remaining regiments, and by officers especially.

At 4 o'clock in the morning the bugle sounded. A few men crept out from their little dog tents and commenced preparing to march. But a large proportion, for the first time during four years service, failed to respond. Several Orderly Sergeants remained in their tents, and made no attempt to muster their men or call the roll. But here and there a few familiar voices could be heard ordering the men to "fall in."

In short, the order to move was not generally obeyed, although a small proportion of the regiment packed their ponies and were soon awaiting further orders.

CHAPTER III.

That Mutiny—The boys Refuse to March. The Result—Brazie is Arrested Through Mistake and Cast Into "Durance Vile."—Smoking the Pipe of Peace—Sleeping With Snakes—In the Kickapoo Reservation—An Adventure With Ute Indians—Love at First Sight—Deceptive—"Wild Rose"—We Dine With the "Noble Red Man."

By nine o'clock about one-third of the ponies were packed, the long line of wagons were drawn out, but fully two-thirds of the ponies remained hitched to the picket line. The mutineers gathered in groups, and were loud in their denunciations of their comrades who had made preparations to go.

By some means a rumor got afloat that in case of an attempt to arrest, the men would fight. This spread rapidly, and caused a wild excitement throughout the camps and city. But this was a mistake. No such thought had entered the mind of any man in that camp; but on the contrary, there was a general understanding that all would quietly surrender.

However, a report was current during the day that two negro regiments on duty at the Fort would after night surround the camp and arrest the whole outfit. This report caused a wild commotion among the mutineers, and indeed many who had up to that time taken no part in the mutiny, for this cause determined to join them and repel such an insult, as they regarded it. All day long we lay in camp awaiting impatiently the action of the commanding officer.

From morning till late in the afternoon our mule train remained in line awaiting orders, while the wagon masters and teamsters cussed and swore and gave vent to their wrath by lashing the poor mules, who became restless by long waiting.

Late in the afternoon the train was moved out onto Salt Creek, three miles out on the overland stage route, where they went into camp for the night.

As the shadows of night came upon us another order came to move. Col. Fleming gathered the men together and made a short speech, as did several other officers. Appeals were made to their sense of honor and the shining record of the regiment, which had been purchased by the sacrifice of the lives and blood of hundreds of its members on the field of battle during the dark war which had just closed, and the folly of such a course as the boys were pursuing was pointed out.

As the Colonel spoke tears ran down his dark cheeks, and many hearts were melted. He closed by giving the mutineers another opportunity to obey the order, and as he moved out of camp a short time afterward he was followed by about one-half of his regiment.

He had given assurances that no colored troops were to be used against his boys, and this had a good deal of effect in persuading many. That night about one hundred and fifty of us camped on Salt Creek, whither our train preceded us.

The mutineers gathered up all their equipage and threw it in a heap together. A few officers remained in the old camp to look after the property, for which they were responsible. Among these was our genial and worthy lieutenant, H. W. Brasie.

The boys who are yet living, and who read this, will of course remember him. How could he ever be forgotten, especially by those whose hardships and burdens were lightened by his ever jovial nature, and his oft repeated acts of kindness toward his comrades and those under his care. Shall we ever forget how kind and considerate he was, both of the farmers' interests and his boys. When on going into camp we always received the injunction and caution from him not to take anything for wood but the "top rail" of the fence, and then how he always allowed us to go on the hunt of "barn yard pheasants," so that they were picked before they got into camp.

He was also fond of "venison," no matter if it did have the taste of mutton. He was always ready to listen to any plausible explanation of anything which had the appearance of being a little "crooked"—especially if the forager was willing to divide the spoils.

In him the wit and humor of the whole regiment centered. He was as common in his dress and address as any private, and yet could appear to better advantage on a general parade than any General in the army—when he so desired. He was a West Pointer, and knew how to drill—in fact, knew all there was in it. He rarely ever wore shoulder straps, or any insignia of his rank.

He was up to all kind of tricks, and never let an opportunity pass to play a joke on any one, not even a General.

At one time, while attending a theatre in Washington, at which Pauline Cushman was the star, Brazie was sitting beside a dashing young Colonel who had under his official care a very beautiful lady, whose habits and character were pretty generally known, and were very questionable.

When Pauline made her first appearance upon the stage, of course she received the applause of the vast audience, and was applauded by none more than our fat Lieutenant. Flowers were rained upon the stage like the falling of leaves in autumn.

Amidst the uproar and confusion, the Lieutenant seized the Colonel's plumed hat, and rising to his feet, sailed it over the heads of the audience and it fell upon the stage at the feet of the beautiful actress. Next he plucked a rosette from the dove-like head of the Colonel's blushing partner and it went to keep company with the plumed hat. Never did that grand opera house ring with such a shout of applause as followed.

The hat was soon returned by one of the "supes," with the compliments of the fair actress, and our jovial Lieutenant was "put under arrest," much to the regret of his many friends.

But he got even with the Colonel in a very short time. While passing down Fourteenth street in company with another, one night, he saw the Colonel enter a house of some notoriety among the boys. Waiting a few moments, they followed.

On entering they soon found the Colonel's room, where they discovered him locked in the loving embrace of his lady friend. Here a withdrawal of the charges against the Lieutenant was demanded, and of course it was done—for was not the Colonel a married man? The two blackmailers left the house, feeling that they had "got in their work." The next day the Lieutenant was restored to duty.

At the camp everything was in commotion. Guards from some of the other regiments had been placed around the camp, where they remained until after dark.

About nine o'clock dark lines of troops could be seen moving in the direction of the mutineers' camp. Soon they formed a hollow square, and surrounded the camp. The boys lounged around and seemed not to notice the presence of their guards.

After the camp had been well surrounded detachments were sent into it, who gathered up the mutineers and marched them over to the "Stone Jug," as the boys called the guardhouse. By some means our Lieutenant got mixed up in the crowd of prisoners, and notwithstanding his protests that he was an officer, he was crowded into the lockup, much to the merriment of the boys, who had often been the victims of his pranks and jokes.

But he enjoyed the joke as much as any one. He determined to get even with somebody. Next morning all the prisoners were brought before the proper military court, where they were drawn up in line and their names and rank recorded. Here the good Lieutenant was soon discovered and recognized, and of course soon released with many apologies.

This was good as far as it went, but it did not go far enough. A preliminary hearing was had in the Judge Advocate's office. This gentleman was a high toned red-taper of the regular army. He was likewise a "judge" of good whisky and "fine cut and dry" tobacco, of which he kept a good supply. But after the trial was over, and the boys had been marched off to the "jug," and the officers and spectators had departed, he suddenly discovered that he was short a fine meerschaum pipe and about five pounds of tobacco. The guardhouse was searched, every pocket turned inside out, and the articles not found.

That night about one hundred and fifty men, and a band of Iowa Indians, formed a group around camp fires on Salt Creek, where the tomahawk was buried, and there we smoked the pipe of peace until the blushing morning sun illuminated the eastern horizon. It was a jovial time, and one long to be remembered.

This was our first introduction to the red skin, and it was a novel one. That huge pipe, followed by "tomahawk pipes," "cob pipes," and a hundred other kind of pipe, passed from mouth to mouth with a friendly "how, how," until the last crumb of that "regular army tobacco" had ascended in a cloud of smoke as sweet incense to the "Great Spirit."

Now mind, I don't say positively that the lieutenant "removed" that pipe and tobacco from its headquarters, but we always thought he did.

During the day after the arrest of the mutineers, they were given another chance to join the regiment. About fifty men concluded to do so. The remainder determined to stand a court martial. This, however, never occurred, except in the case of the ring-leaders, who were tried and sentenced to some military prison for a short term of years, but soon pardoned.

Adjutant General Pierpoint, nephew of the Governor of West Virginia, was sent for, and in a few days arrived. He met the boys, and through his personal friendship and kind persuasion and advice, the remainder soon consented to cross the plains, and accordingly soon left Leavenworth under Lieutenant-Colonel Fleming. But they only went as far west as Fort Sedwick, in Colorado. This ended the mutiny.

We go back to the regiment on Salt Creek. The second morning of our encampment dawns, and we are in line of march. Our long train is drawn out, and we present a very imposing spectacle. We have slept well, after our previous night of dissipation, and we all feel that this is the dawn of a new life.

The day is beautiful, and the prairie stretching out before us, covered with its rich carpet of green grass, is a sight which calls forth exclamations of wonder and admiration from the boys who were reared in the mountains of West Virginia, or the iron hills of Southern Ohio.

The first and second days out are spent in shooting prairie chickens. We pass across a pretty country, and the second night camp at Kinnakuck creek, near a little village of the same name. We are now in the heart of the Potawottamie and Kickapoo Indian reserves. We have spent a good portion of the time in visiting camps along the way, and making ourselves familiar with their habits.

The dissatisfaction, or "little unpleasantness," at Fort Leavenworth, is forgotten. In the new and strange scenes of our march we almost forgot the three or four years of hard fighting and marching just passed, and every day brings with it its pleasures and delights.

Our camp here proves to be unfortunate. We "stake" our ponies out to graze. A large area of land is required for a small herd of ponies. Our lariettes are forty feet in length, and hence eighty feet is required between ponies to prevent contact.

During the early evening some Indians came into camp, and the boys try their hand at shooting with a genuine bow and arrow. All the old coins in the regiment are raked up and placed in the end of a stick, which is stuck in the ground for a target, and one by one they are knocked out and dropped into the wallet of the pesky red rascal, who rarely ever misses his mark.

I had learned a little of the Potawattamie language when living in Kansas a few years before, and here I surprised the boys by engaging a little squaw in conversation in her own tongue. It didn't last long, for I soon run short of tongue, of her kind.

As the curtain of night fell upon us a cloud appeared on the horizon, and soon the rain came down in torrents. It was such a rain as we had never seen in the East, and our little tents afforded but meagre shelter. All night long it poured down upon us, and when the day dawned there was not a dry stitch in the camp. We pitched our tents in all the higher places, in order to keep as dry as possible.

As day broke we were startled by a comrade by the name of Burton, who tumbled out of his tent entangled in his gun slings, revolvers, old boots and blankets, shouting:

"Holy Moses! Snakes! snakes! Whoop! whoop! Turn out, boys. Come out of your holes! Snakes!"

The next instant his partner, awakened by the cry, rises on his elbow and yawns, then seeing the cause of Burton's alarm springs to his feet, and tearing the tent from its pins dashes through the camp, completely enveloped in canvas. Both these men had been drinking a good deal, and the first thought of all was that they were seized with "fits."

Now all over the camp the boys are seen rolling out from under the sides of tents; others spring out with boots in hand, while others roll up in their blankets and lie still. In a moment after the first alarm the whole camp is in a fever of excitement and commotion.

Sabres, carbines, boots, tent poles, and everything that could be used as a weapon, was seized, and a general slaughter of snakes followed.

It was soon discovered that hundreds of small prairie rattlesnakes had taken refuge with us in our tents from the storm. Some were under blankets, others coiled up on top, and some had found increased comfort in old cavalry boots.

I remember an Irishman, whom we will call Flinn, for short. Flinn had sat for some time on a cracker box, near a smoking pile of wet wood, over which the boys were trying to boil coffee. He had donned his garments one by one. He had pulled on his half-dried stockings. Then picking up a boot he turned it upside down, then pulled it on.

He sat for a moment "chinning" the boys and keeping up a general laugh with his wit and humor.

"There's no snakes on the Green Isle. Divil the one did I see in thirty years in Ireland. I guess, be the mother of St. Patrick, all the bloody varmints came to Kansas when St. Patrick banished them from the ould country."

He then picked up the other boot, but immediately laid it down again. A peculiar expression spread over his face. He sat for an instant with his eyes cast upon the boot which contained his foot. Then his countenance assumed a deathlike pallor. He raised his foot slowly to one of the boys near him.

"Will ye plase be after pullin' that boot off immadiately, if not sooner?"

The boot was soon straddled and pulled. It slipped a little, making a little more room in the toe. Flinn was now sure of a perceptible movement of something in the toe of that boot.

"Ye gods!" yelled Flinn. "Yank the boot from off me foot immadiately—immadiately, if not at once. Och! mother of Moses!" And the poor frightened Irishman hopped on one foot, while all the boys laughed and yelled, until he fell over a wagon tongue, where he was seized and the boot pulled off, turned up, and a small rattlesnake, six inches in length, dropped out.

"Och! bloody thunder! It's a narrow escape from death, sure,' said Flinn, as he hobbled around on one foot. "Kill the varmint immediately."

Ever after our experience with the snakes, related in the last chapter, we were very cautious. On awakening in the morning we always made a thorough examination of the interior of our tents, handling every blanket tenderly and cautiously, lest some intruder might be suddenly aroused.

We remained at this camp during the day, and the following night in order to give our clothing a good drying. It was an unfortunate camp, as the sequel will show.

We are now in the Kickapoo Indian reservation. All along the stream upon which we are camped are half-civilized Indians. Some have little patches of land under a poor state of cultivation; some do not farm at all, although they own splendid claims; while all subsist upon "swapping" ponies, selling moccasins which the squaws have made, or from hunting, fishing or stealing.

These Indians have all since been swindled out of their valuable lands by railroad companies and Government agents, and the land has passed into the hands of thrifty farmers.

At the time of which I write, the Wyandotte, Kaw, Sac and Fox, Pottowottamie and Kickapoo Indians owned nearly all the wooded lands along the Kaw river and some of its large tributary streams. But they are all gone—some to the Indian Territory, others to the mountains beyond the plains.

During the forenoon, three discontented and roving spirits, mounted upon three old, knotty, shaved mane broncoes, slipped out of camp and following the woods along the stream, meandered their way down toward the Kaw river in quest of game, fun, or anything else which might turn up.

We had proceeded but a short distance when a man came in sight over one of the bluffs a mile away. It was evident that he had been stirred up by something, for he came like the wind—down into the canyon, then up the slope—then he sees "we three," and turning his pony's head towards us, he dashes down the hill on a dead charge. Just on top of the hill over which he had passed we now suddenly discerned the figures of several mounted men, and from their appearance we at once conclude they are "Ingins."

At this moment a dark form sweeps down upon us like an avalanche, and the old pony stops short, almost upsetting his frightened rider. We recognize "Cal," a young darkey—an attache of our camp.

"Hello! What's up?" we all sing out.

"Fo' God, boys, de woods am full ob Ingins—done chase dis coon fo' miles. Come mighty near cotchin' dis nigga, sure!" And Cal stopped to catch his breath.

We knew well that there could be no hostile Indians in this locality; but knowing the Indians' animosity and hatred of the negro, we enjoyed the joke, and determined at once to have some fun out of it.

"Where are the reds, Cal?" asked Billingley.

"Bout fo' miles down de creek. Yer see, I was done goin' 'long de woods huntin' fo' de buffalo what de boys says was roamin' wild by de thousand for anybody to kill, when all to onct 'bout 'leben hundred Ingins charged on me out ob de brush. 'Fo I could git de pesky hoss started for to run, de red debils all close up an' cotch de bridle rane, a' den I done gib myself up. Yer see, I tried to 'ploy out on de skummish line, but da hol' me fas'."

"What did they do with you then?" we asked, becoming much interested in Cal's adventure.

"Well, dey all whoop an' whoop, an' den da set up a big yell, an den dey ax me for to git off. Ob course I gits off, an' den dey takes me to de big fire whar da done roas' de captives. Den I done think' de jigs up. Den da all pull my har, an' say, "sow-pumpkin," "sow-pumpkin'" or sumfin' like dat. I done keep lookin' 'round hopin' dat de Kurnel would send de gard arter me, but I seed nuffin' but a million Ingins wid der tomas-hawks an' skelpin'-knives as long as yer arm, all waitin' fur de captin ob de squad to gib de command fur to butcher me. Jes as I was spectin' to be chawed up alive, de big Ingin wid de paint on his face says, "Nigger go, leave gun, take pony—go!' I wasn't carin' fo' de ole gun, case it didn't b'long to me nohow, case it was de lutenant's, so I wasn't mo' nor a second marchin' out ob dat camp."

"But why did you run so?" we asked.

"Why, yer see, de whole million ob 'em tuck arter me. So yer see, I was cuttin' fur camp—I was boss—I was jes makin' one less ob dat tea party, boss, I was!" And Cal shrugged his shoulders and chuckled a dry laugh at what he thought to be a narrow escape from a dreadful fate at the hands of hostile savages.

We had been moving slowly along as Cal narrated his adventure, and now we concluded to visit this camp, and if possible take the darkey with us.

"Yer on de wrong line ob march fur dis coon boys. I haint go no orders fur dat way. Ise gwine to camp, I is."

"No, no, Cal. Come with us. You shan't be hurt. Those Indians live here, and are civilzed. They were only making a fool out of you. We're going down to that camp." And by a good deal of persuasion we coaxed him on until we finally came suddenly upon a few "bucks" who had been fishing and were returning to camp.

"How!"

"How!" we reply, as they advance with outstretched hands for a shake.

"*Sow pocher!*" says one as he looks up and sees our black companion. "*Sow pocher!* heap no good—no scalp—face heap dirt—no good—heap no good—Ingin heap no like niggar."

We ride on a few yards, Cal keeping well covered by our ponies, and evidently expecting to be shot down at any moment.

"*Tu-cinuwasha-chu-muc-tobac?*" said one. I at once understood the noble red man is asking for smoking tobacco, and we all haul out our pouches at once, and when we get them back a few moments later they are much lighter.

No Indian will smoke his pipe alone, hence we all got a pull at the filthy end of some old tomahawk pipes whose blade, no doubt, had split the head of many a white victim. One thing was noticeable, the pipe was never passed to our colored friend, and this fact gave Cal more uneasiness.

But we now come upon the camp. There are perhaps a dozen tepees scattered irregularly in the edge of the woods in the bend of the creek. We advance to the large tent upon which are various ornaments and decorations, and we all sing out in a chorus, "How!"

In an instant several wolfish looking dogs set up a yell, and the whole camp is at once in commotion.

"How! how!" comes from within the big tent, and an old chief creeps out and extends his paw for a shake.

"*Sow pocher!* much heap run like antelope," says one old squaw, and then they all grunt and grin.

We now learn that this is a band of Utes, who have come all the way from their homes near Pike's Peak. They are ladened with robes, moccasins, leggins, and many things to "swap." Hitched all around the camp are a number of good ponies, and grazing out on the prairie a short distance are others with feet "withed" together, or one fore-foot hobbled to the neck, all feeding in grass knee deep.

It is now near noon, and over a fire is suspended a camp kettle.

The smell of fresh meat cooking is borne to our nostrils, and our hunger is increased thereby. By signs and broken English we are invited to dismount.

"Washington sojer heap good. Ingin much like sojer. Eat meat with Ingin," said one.

We knew he was lying about his love for the "sojer," but we concluded at once to accept the invitation to dine. So we got down, strung out our lassos and staked the ponies out to graze, and then we entered the "big lodge."

Lying upon robes spread over the ground are well worn and greasy cards which have just been in a game of poker, which game was broken up by our arrival. We throw ourselves down, and at once commence to trade for moccasins and other articles. As the trade is going on, the entrance to the tent opens, and a neat little figure appears.

"White man call her Rose," said the Indian, as he noticed our surprise. We immediately lost our interest in the trading, and all eyes are turned upon the "Wild Rose" which has so suddenly bloomed out before us. I am much the younger of the three, and very susceptible. In an instant I felt a sort of something I could not then understand, but which I have since learned was "love at first sight."

She was neatly clad in a garb of half-civilized, half-wild combination of buckskin, beads and calico. Her feet were encased in small moccasins, nicely beaded, and her well rounded limbs, which were modestly exposed, give her an appearance altogether fascinating to one so young and tender as the writer.

She was much whiter than the others, and there evidently flowed in her veins a small portion of the blood of the pale face. She is perhaps seventeen, although she does not appear so old.

For one moment she stood like the picture of a beautiful dream before us, looking first at one and then at the other. I felt my heart bound as she cast her eyes upon me, and gazing for an instant, then with a smile came to me and cast herself down on the robe by my side.

I thought I could see in the eyes of my comrades a tinge of jealousy, and I noticed at once that her action met with the approbation of the old chief, who gave a little nod and a big grunt, and then a sharp hiss between his teeth.

She at once made herself familiar by taking my hand and admiring a ring upon one of my fingers. Then she examined my belt, saber, carbine, revolver, and wanted to get her hands into my pockets to see what they contained. I thought she was making love all the time, and of course I allowed her privileges which would not have been accorded to an ordinary being.

"How old is little squaw?" I ventured to ask, and as I looked up I saw Burton and Billingley wink at each other, and I felt a blush spread over my face.

She held up ten fingers, then five, then one—sixteen.

"How many winters you live?" she asked, in broken English.

I replied by holding up ten fingers, then seven—seventeen.

"Good; white man live one winter more than squaw."

At this point an old hussy of a squaw, with a patch of fire-clay on her head came in and handed her a pair of beaded moccasins. A little parley seemed to take place between them, and I thought I could detect the cause at once—the old woman wanted to make business out of the young girl's opportunity to make love, and I thought it an intrusion which the little Rose resented.

I sympathized with her, and when she proposed to "swap" I at once asked, "How much swap?"

"Pie dollar," and up went five fingers.

In an instant I whipped out a five dollar bill and paid the price without a protest, although the moccasins were three sizes too large and not worth half the money. I wanted to please her. I thought I heard one of the boys say something about somebody being "green," but I allowed it to pass, thinking he was jealous.

Every glance of her eye, every movement of her head, every sign, or action, were fascinating to me, and were new links in the chain with which she was binding me.

How foolish, how "green" I was. Twelve hours after that I could have seen her scalped without a thought of sympathy.

I wore long raven black hair, and this she seemed to admire very much.

"Heap like Ingin," she said, as her little fingers stroked out the kinks which hadn't seen a comb for over two months. This combing process I liked very much, and had just begun to enjoy it when an old squaw came to the lappell of the tepee and announced that the meat was ready. We didn't understand just what she said, but her words were interpreted by the buck of English education.

"Washington sojer eat Ingin meat," and he opened his mouth and crammed all his fingers down his throat. We all rose up, and the chief led the way. My new-found love caught my revolver belt and led me to a spot near the kettle. We formed a circle, a dozen of us—white, black and red—around the pot, which had been placed in a grassy spot, all sitting on our feet like tailors.

A large piece of meat is now lifted out and placed in a nasty looking mess pan. The old buck draws a nasty looking knife from his scabbard, which no doubt has lifted many a scalp from the heads of his victims, and with it he carves the meat into half-pound chunks. These are passed around with fingers. We all carry scalping knives, and we now use them to eat with.

We pitch in without any further ceremony, and the "filling up," as the boys called it, was under headway.

Of course we didn't ask what kind of meat it was—no matter, it was good, and that was enough to know. Bread was passed around "on stick." It was baked in this way: By wrapping a long string of dough around a greased stick and holding it over the coals until baked. It lacked salt, as did the meat, but salt was passed around and we were allowed to season it to the taste.

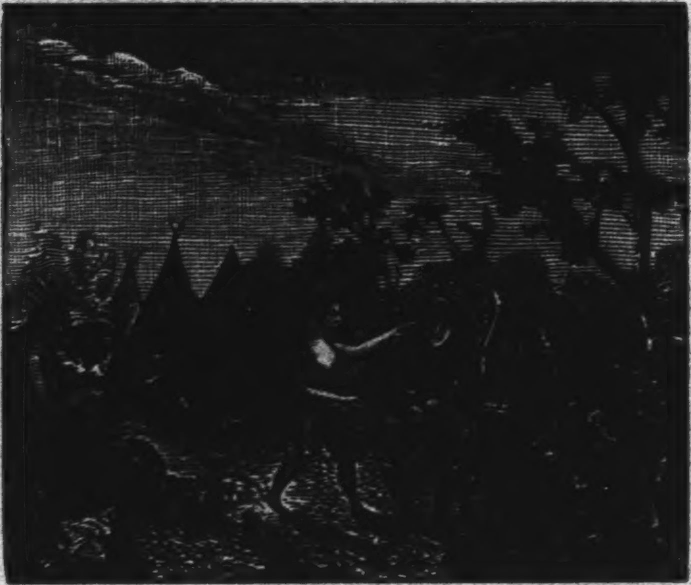
Our colored boy had gradually simmered down, and was now helping himself with the others.

We had coffee which had not been browned, and a green poisonous scum was floating upon the surface of the one cup out of which we all drank.

Before commencing to eat Bunton had passed around a canteen of "fire-water," and all partook, especially the old buck, who seemed to have a copper bottom attached to his stomach. From the quantity he drank I knew he would soon be beastly drunk, and it gave me some uneasiness, for I did not like the old gentleman's eye even when sober.

Dinner over, the boys try to strike a trade—trade a Government pony for one of their own—but the Indian was not to be fooled; wetting his hand he would slick down the hair on the left shoulder of the pony and plainly reveal the "U. S." Then he would exclaim, "Ugh! Washington pony!"

The old man soon became drunk, and whooped and yelled, but was soon laid away on the shelf in a helpless and harmless condition.



"We Formed a Circle, a Dozen of us, White, Black and Red, Around the Pot.

I devoted every spare moment to making love to the little girl, while the others were attending to trading. To my misled mind my love was returned. Once I attempted to kiss her when the boys were not looking, but from the awkward manner in which she returned it, or tried to bite my nose off, I concluded she had never been kissed, and didn't know what it meant. She had already slipped the gold ring from my finger and was wearing it upon her own.

But all things have an end in this world. One of the boys called me, and I went down through the brush, closely followed by my Wild Rose. All at once I came upon a great bloody spot, and over a limb I discovered a raw skin. I am tempted by curiosity to examine it. On raising up one side and seeing the hair, a startling revelation dawns upon me. I call the boys up.

"See there, boys."

"Well what? Some kind of skin, I guess," answered one.

"Yes; dog skin, and of course a dog dinner!"

"Dog dinner!" echoed all in a chorus.

"Je-ru-ci-lem!" exclaimed Billingly, and a twitching was visible around his mouth.

"Thun-der-ation on the blasted Indians!" said Bunton, as he gave the hide a turn with his scabbard.

"Fo' God, boss; dat meat tase like possum. 'Tain't gwine to hurt nobody very much, I guess, though."

But the purp wouldn't stay down, and in a moment we were all casting the dog upon the ground, while the red rascals gathered around us and seemed to take delight in the rebellion which had taken place in our stomachs.

We soon mount our ponies and start for camp. As we rode off the buck of English tongue said: "Come back next week; get more dog."

I cast a look upon my Red Rose, and in vain tried to call back some of the fire which I all at once find has almost gone out. But it could not be fanned into new life. I felt sick—sick of everything—especially Indians, dog dinners, green coffee, and dirty, deceptive squaws.

CHAPTER IV.

Description of a "Bull Train"—Our Herd is Stampeded—The Indians Fetch in the Lost Stock and Demand a Reward—They Get It—Our Officers Interfere and Prevent a Slaughter—Arrival at Fort Kerney, Nebraska—Scenes Along the Route—"Buzz" Buzzes into Camp—Black Gallinippers—Overland Stage—How the Boys Guarded It—Whiskey Goes Up to 25 cents—First Buffalo "Chips"—A Splendid Fight Over a "Chip," &c.

After leaving the Indian camp and proceeding on our way to our camp about a mile, we discovered that the moccasins which I had bought were missing. I at once hastened back to the camp and requested the young dame to bring out the shoes. I noticed that her manner had changed and that she now seemed unwilling to converse on any subject, especially on the shoe business.

I demanded the slippers first in a friendly manner, then I became angry and threatened to bring down all the "Washington soldiers" in the United States upon them, but all in vain. I was soon ordered in a tone not to be mistaken, to "Si-tuk-ku tepe," which I aftewards learnt meant "make yourself scarce in the immediate vicinity of this respectable and peaceable community." Not one of them could now speak a word of English. and pretended not to understand a word of what I said.

I left, swearing eternal vengeance on the "Ingin," and determining to have a scalp for every dollar paid on those morcasins. However, I will add right here that the scalping part of the resolution is yet to be carried out, for some how or other things didn't pan out just as I thought they would, and those Indians are still wearing their hair.

Billingsley gave me away in camp, and I was made to suffer in flesh and spirit by their taunts and jokes until the thing got old, and something new sprang up to take its place.

During this season the Platte route to Denver City, Salt Lake and all the military posts on the North and South Platte were lined with Government, emigrant and transportation trains. No railroad had yet penetrated the Western desert, but all supplies for soldiers, miners and settlers in the Rocky mountains and a large proportion of the Pacific slope had to be transported by great wagon trains for a distance of from 600 to 1,500 miles.

The scene along this, as well as other routes, southwest and west, can hardly be described. We were not out of sight of trains for a distance of 500 miles. Every night our camp was composed of many different trains, with men of all nations as teamsters. It was a common thing to see in one of these camps Americans, Englishmen, Germans, Mexicans, Negroes, Half-breed Indians, full-blooded bucks—in fact, all nations on the face of the earth, except China, were represented in almost any of these camps. The Chinaman had not yet found his way to the Pacific slope, but like the grasshopper plague, they swept down on California the year following in vast numbers.

In passing these slow trains with their five tons burden of freight to each wagon, drawn by from six to twelve yoke of cattle, you ask the dark skin, long haired individual of the broad-brimmed hat "where are you from?" he immediately flourishes his long heavy whip and looking along his line of cattle he replies in a singing sort of a tone, "Omaha-ha-hay-ha-hoy, whoa buck, come here Grant, you Sheridan, g'long old Abe," and he goes on calling his twenty-four head of cattle, after as many of his favorite Generals, and thus one could tell just where the "bullwhacker's" sympathies were centered, North or South. You ask him where he is bound for, and in the same tone he sings, "Idaho-ha-ho ha-hoy," and you must understand that this train is destined for Idaho. Look upon the canvas cover of his long wagon, and you read in rude charcoal letters: "Hell Roarin' Bill, from Bull Crick, Va.," or "ax no questions Ile tel yer no lys," "Min' yer bizness," or some other poetic expression.

During the day of our camp in Kenakuck, several trains came up and went into camp to await the receding of the creek which was too high to cross. We mingle together, trade ponies and swap in everything, and gambling is indulged in. Poker is the one great business of everybody on the Plains. No man was ever so pious as to accomplish a slow march across the Plains without playing poker. I doubt very much if Horace Greeley escaped the thousand snares and temptations of this kind when he made his second trip in a spring wagon over the desert.

We had one man whose mania was "chuck-a-luck;" he opened his bank at every camp, and took in the "bullwhacker" whenever opportunity afforded. The second night in this camp comes on, our pickets lines are shortened, so as to get all within as short a scope as possible, supper is over, and the usual amusement of card playing is commenced. Through the thin shelter tents can be seen the dim lights of a hundred tallow candles, and the low murmur of voices are audible: "Gimme two cards," "I'll take three," "Five dollars on my hand," "I'll see that and go you five better," "I raise you twenty," "All right, I'll see that," "Flush," "Four kings—my pot." These are some of the expressions and phrases which fall upon the ear of the guard as he treads his lonely beat along the lower edge of the creek. Midnight draws near and the candles have burned low down into the bar of soap which serves as a candlestick. There is no moon, but the stars look down upon the sentinel and wink as if to give him warning of that which is about to transpire.

"Whoop, whoop, whoop-ee-ee," and the rattle of a stiff buffalo robe is heard at the edge of the brush near the creek. There is a sound as of a rushing wind. Picket pins fly through the air with a whizzing sound, tents are snatched from their fastenings, horses, mules and ponies dash in one solid mass through the camp, upsetting wagons, ambulances, and everything in the way, and in one instant that camp was ponyless. On, on, away they fly, like a cyclone, taking everything before them, now joined by a herd of cattle; now reinforced by a herd of mules a few miles further on—on they go, and the sound of retreating hoofs dies away in the distance and the trembling earth is again still.

One moment ago all was quiet. Now there is a rushing to and fro and all is wild with commotion. We are left alone with our wagons, saddles and equipage, but our mules and ponies are gone—no not all gone, for here and there are a few mules who failed to break their fastenings in the first rush. However, all the mules had escaped from the corral, and only a few that had been well fastened outside remained.

Quiet is soon restored, the guard tells his story and we begin to understand the situation, the boys swore that when the sun should again illuminate the eastern horizon, some bloody Ingin must pay the forfeit with his worthless life. There is no sleep in camp that night, and by daybreak several squads are organized to go in pursuit. All the remaining stock are saddled, and mounted upon them, and some on foot, we start back toward the Missouri river.

With the dawn of day comes several bands of Indians leading ponies and mules— a part of our stock.

"Ingin fitchee pony back. Soger give poor Ingin *good-me qua-aspin,*" said one young buck, who looked like he had grown fat on the heart's blood of "sogers."

"He says he has brought the ponies back and wants a good thrashing," explained one of the boys.

Of course we didn't stop to parley, but took forcible possession as fast as they came in. While we had several bucks surrounded, and Flin was discussing the various methods of "killing the bloody ah thens," two more Indians come riding into camp leading ponies. Bunton and I at once recognized two of our new acquaintances of the day previous, who "set up" the canine soup. It was enough. The sight of these can(ine)bies called up the scenes of the day before; and for a few minutes things looked decidedly like a massacre of the whole gang would take place. Flin made a shillalee of his carbine, Bunton drew his rusty sabre, while Billingsley seized one of the savages by the throat and jerked him roughly to the ground. Then there was a few yells, which brought the rest of the gang together, who all at once broke out in all the broken English they knew and begged for mercy.

Our officers interfered, and the reds got off with a few bloody noses and black eyes, and as they disappeared around the bend of the road they gave us a parting salute by drawing large scalping knives from their belts which they flourished over their heads.

"It won't be safe to meet those fellows, boys, where the odds are against you," said Major Squires, "and I advise you to keep on the look out."

It is needless to say that no more ponies were brought back by those Indians, although a few civilized Pottawatamies were afterward employed to assist the boys in the pursuit.

Two days were spent in gathering up our stock, many ponies and mules being so badly crippled as to render them useless, and many were never at all found. I had procured an old mule, and during the day wandered off several miles up the creek alone. While hunting for a ford, my attention was attracted to a pony near me fastened in the woods. On approaching nearer I recognized the old hero, "Garibaldi." Then I remembered that my old wayward friend, Cahel, had not been with us for several days, and I at once began to search the woods for him. I had not much trouble in finding him. He was lying beside a log half covered with leaves, and wrapped in his blanket.

He had a severe fit of delirium tremens, and although he recognized me, he could not speak my name. His hand felt for his canteen and he raised it toward me. I understood at once that he must have whisky, and I hastened off to the village for the needful. Returning an hour later, I found him leaning against the log, and in terrible agony; raising his head I poured a few drops down his throat but he at once threw it up. He seemed very willing to try again and after repeated efforts got it to "stick." He soon was able to talk. He could give no account of himself; but thought he had been led off by some Kickapoo Indians.

Leaving him at a small Indian hut where they promised to take care of him and his pony. I left him with a promise that he would soon follow. We never saw or heard of Sylvester Cahel again, or his faithful old pony. Returning thirteen months after, I made a diligent search, but could get no trace of him. Strangers occupied the little hut and none could give any information. He may have been murdered and robbed. His wife lives in Richmondale, Ohio, and if this should meet her eyes we hope she will furnish the author with any information of this lost soldier she may have.

Of the boys now living, who crossed the plains on this expedition, the writer is able to furnish the whereabouts of but a few.

Sergeant Abe Pancake lives near Milton, Cabell county, West Virginia. He was a noble, and faithful soldier, and will be kindly remembered by all who knew him. John Brammer, Wm. Martin, James Bruce, Martin Basel. G. H. Holliday, and several others, live in Lawrence county, Ohio. They all bore an active part in this war, besides a full share of the field of battle in the war for the Union. And many of them bear marks and afflictions as mementos of the hardest and coldest winter ever passed through by any soldiers on the plains or in the Rocky Mountains.

We moved the next day, but in a very crippled condition. But now in order to be brief we must pass over many incibents and adventures along the route and hasten on. Every day's march brings with it new scenes and adventures, and as we pass slowly over the garden spot of the world, many of our men resolve to make their future home in Kansas or Nebraska.

Thirty days have passed and we arrive at Fort Kearney, Nebraska. The weather has been beautiful and we have had abundance of sport hunting antelope, wild turkey and prairie chickens. In our company were forty Henry rifles—16 shooters. These had been brought into requisition and their value had been greatly enhanced. We are now upon the great Platte river. At Fort Kearney there is plenty of timber on the river, and occasionally some scrub oaks and cottonwood are found as far on as Fort McPherson, but beyond that for three hundred miles all is a sandy desert, with not a stick of wood to be seen.

We lay at Kearney several days, and for want of sufficient grass are compelled to feed our ponies on corn. Many of them had never eaten corn and it required some starving and considerable patience to get them to take hold. While there we visited the scene of the "Phil. Kearney Massacre." Here a large number of Indians were decoyed into the mouth of a battery of artillery and mowed down with grape and canister until but a few were left to tell how it felt. This was done some years before, by order of the brave Gen. Kearney.

The barren sand bluffs back of the fort for many miles are strewn with the carcasses of thousands of buffalo which give us the impression that we would soon be among them. But we learned that these had been killed several years and that their carcasses were preserved by the alkali in the atmosphere. Indeed they were so well preserved that in many cases the bodies were whole and gave forth a sound like that of a bass drum when struck with a club or gun barrel.

"Buze" Lindsey, one of our boys who was always full of curiosity, mounted his old mustang and went over to the timber on the Platte, a distance of over three miles, but not out of sight of the camp, on a prospecting tour.

He had just entered the bush when we saw him whirl and start in the direction of camp like a scared wolf. Buze boasted of having the fleetest pony in the "outfit," and on the occasion he seemed to be doing his best. We could see nothing pursuing, and of course we were at a loss to know what his hasty retreat meant. And as he neared the camp we could see that his hat was in motion, making rapid revolutions around his head. Then a cloud was visible, black as an

Egyptian midnight all around him, as he appeared, his form and his pony too were almost invisible.

"Black gallinippers," shouted an old Bullwhacker. "Git inter yer holes and pull the hole in arter yer." And the old whacker made a dive for the nearest tent; then like a town of prairie dogs we all dived into our holes, not any too soon, for Buss came buzzing into camp like a hurricane, and tumbling from his kicking pony and seizing a stray blanket threw it over his head and sank down in the hot sand. Such a sight we never saw.

The frightened, frantic pony went tearing through the camp rubbing against everything which came in his way. The insects began to settle and find their way into every crack and crevice in the tents.

"Burn powder," shrieked the Bullwacker. And in a few moments a great cloud of smoke arose and the invaders fled, not, however, before they had nipped a good many ponies and came near causing a stampede. Lindsey's face was a sight to behold. In a few moments his face had swollen until his eyes were closed. After this we were compelled to burn buffalo chips and wet powder before we could sleep.

Every day since leaving Missouri river, we had been passed by the western bound over-land stage and the incoming daily stage from Denver City.

Those who have not seen an over-land stage on the road from the Missouri river to the Pacific slope, cannot form an idea of the speed with which they travel. Stations are from 10 to 30 miles apart. These stations are the most desolate looking places that the eye of man ever looked upon. The stables in many places are built of sod or dobies and contain from twelve to twenty head of excellent, well fed, but hard worked horses. Beyond Fort Kearney all stations are guarded by soldiers, generally a detachment of infantry and cavalry. The coach is always accompanied by from four to twenty cavalry guards, as the danger may require. We will try and describe the scene of changing horses at one of these lonely and desolate ranches.

See, away yonder in the distance, a cloud of dust is visible. Now it clears away and nothing can be seen. But it is enough; the men of the ranche understand it, and in an instant all is business about the stable, and soldier's quarters, which are under one dirt roof. Six match horses are harnessed and rushed out in front. Then a squad af cavalry, mounted upon ponies, take their places near the road, a keg of fresh water is placed in readiness, and everything is ready. Look! there they come, just yonder over the butte, fifteen miles per hour, on, on, not slacking their speed for any obstacle, up and down, at a fearful gallop, now they dash down the road leaving a dense cloud of dust behind them, and in an instant the rubber is applied and the panting, foaming horses come to a stand-still.

The mounted guard, covered with dust, straggle in close order behind. The driver, who is the most important man on the plains (in his own judgment,) has cast his lines to either side and the horses are quickly removed, fresh ones take their places and in two minutes the old stage moves rapidly away, and soon is lost to sight like a ship on the sea.

There is no time to be lost, for this stage must run seven hundred miles in seven days. But this stage line is a thing of the past, and has long since been superseded by the iron horse, and the old stagers have lost their prestige, and many of them gone to their graves in sorrow.

At Kearney all trains of all descriptions, except those with military escorts, were stopped and organized into divisions. A wagon master from some of the trains was selected to take charge of the division with the rank of "Major General of Bull-whackers;" his authority depended a great deal upon his pluck and his *skill* as a pugilist, or his ability to get the drop on an unruly subordinate.

After one division had left, trains were sometimes delayed for a few days in order to make up the next division, but a division left the fort almost every day during the spring and summer. This was done by the military authorities for the better protection of human life and property against the hostile Indians.

Five miles beyond Kearney is Dogtown, a village of perhaps three hundred inhabitants. There was not one frame, brick, or stone house in the town. All were of adobes, or sod, with dirt roof. A few of us, on the day we left Kearney, were out chasing a gang of wolves, and had straggled behind, when we came into this dirt village. As usual we found a large number of ponies standing in groups around the ranches. On this particular occasion there was something unusual going on. The boys seemed to be excited and very angry. Crowds were gathered here and there, and some were making wild gestures, others were swearing, and there seemed to be an earnest protest against some outrage which had no doubt been perpetrated—perhaps by some citizen upon one of our boys.

"What's the matter here, boys?" we asked as we rode up.

"Matter, matter; why, matter enough," said one fellow with an injured look on his saddle colored face.

"Well, what in thunder is it?" we again asked, as we dismounted with a determination to maul the man who would dare harm a hair on the head of any of our comrades.

"Come here, boys," and we rushed over to a big corporal. "Now I want to tell you this, and want you to keep cool. Don't get excited, for we're going to make things all k'rect before we leave this burg, and don't you forget it," and his face gave the impression that something awful had happened and something startling would soon transpire.

"All right, corp.; what's up? We're with you. Don't keep us in suspense."

Again his face assumed an injured look as he said in a low, confidential tone:

"*Boys, whisky's ris to 25 cents a glass*, and it's an imposition which no true Virginian will ever stand and live;" and on saying this he rammed his big fist half-way through the sod wall of the low filthy ranch.

So this was the trouble. It was evident that the boys would strike for lower prices on whisky. They had been paying first 10 cents, away down in Kansas, then as we got further west it jumped all at once to 15 cents, and now 25 cents is demanded. Well, to make the thing short, the boys didn't pay 25 cents, but mildly persuaded the ranchmen to furnish a limited number of drinks at 15 cents.

But the boys had to come to it at last, and before the plains had been crossed and the Rocky Mountains were reached they thought 25 cents a very pious, honest price for a glass of Irish fire-water, and often had to pay 50 cents for a very poor quality. It was remarkable that when 50 cents was the price, they drank more than when paying ten cents for the nasty stuff.

Between here and Cotton-wood Falls, or Fort McPherson, as it is now called, for the first time we had to burn buffalo chips, so called, but in reality ox chips. These chips are dropped every day by the vast herds of cattle which belong to the passing trains, who graze along every foot of the trail. In two hours after they are dropped, the burning rays of the sun and the hot sand had completely dried them ready for fuel, so that one train passing furnishes chips for the next one following.

We cut a narrow ditch in the ground for a fire place, over which we set our coffee pots, camp-kettles and frying-pans, then place our chips under the vessel and set fire to it, and in a very short time have our "sow-belly" fried and coffee boiled.

For some distance after leaving Cotton-wood chips are extremely scarce, and as a result, when we go into camp a general rush is made in every direction in search of the precious little things, which are few and far between.

We remember of a fight on one occasion, over a chip which would not be worth mentioning, were it not for the fact that a *chip* was the bone of contention, or a prize for which the parties were contending.

It was a common thing to see a race for a chip, but on this occasion both seemed to reach it at the same instant and a tussle ensued, which soon took the form of a downright fight; but, like the cats and the monkey with the cheese, both lost the chip, for while the fight was going on one of the boys, with an eye to business, slipped it in his sack and walked off with it.

At Cotton-wood we were reinforced by a company of Winnabo Indians who were in the employ of the Government as scouts, and were uniformed and under a white captain. With these Indians our force was increased to about 375 men.

We journey along at the rate of fifteen miles a day; the journey has begun to grow monotonous. One evening we came down on an old stage station, called Alkili Station, or Old California Crossing. It must be remembered that our line of march has been along the Platte river, which at this point divides Colorado from Dakota.

Here we went into camp a mile beyond the Station. Our herd is sent out under a stronger escort than usual, which causes some comments and surprise among the men in camp. A stronger camp guard than common is placed on duty and we are all ordered to keep on our revolvers, and our guns in readiness.

During the day some of our Indians had crossed the river and penetrated far into the barren sand bluffs of Dakota. About 8'oclock the herds are brought in and all corralled within the enclosure made by the wagons. The night was calm and beautiful and many of the boys had been playing cards by moonlight. About midnight the guards report that strange, unusual sounds have been heard across the river. Presently some of the Indian scouts come in with their ponies drenched and dripping with water.

They had a short conversation with their Captain in their own tongue, then Major Squires orders every man to saddle up and mount as quickly as possible. Two more indians are sent out; but soon return. We, in the meantime, learned that a party of Sioux Indians are on the Dakota bluffs, on the opposite side of the river, and that they evidently intended to cross before day-break and cross the great wagon trail in the night when they would most likely meet the least opposition. There are other trains camped near us and they had been warned and had all placed themselves in an attitude of defense.

CHAPTER V.

Battle of "California Crossing"—Three Hundred West Virginia Cavalry Pitted Against Fifteen Hundred Sioux—Flinn and Two Others "Flood" a Dog Town and Capture the "Burgiss of the Burrow"—Also a Snake—Likewise an Owl, &c.,—The Soldier Would "Sell His Shirt First"—Making Adobes—Rebuilding the Town of Julesburg—Beshcau's Ranch—Antelope Hunting..

Just above us the sand bluffs run down to a point near the river, narrowing the valley. Just at this point was a ford.

Leaving our train and camp in charge of a small force, we silently stole away in Indian file to the bluffs, through which we hastily marched to the point opposite the ford. Here we waited in breathless anxiety for further developments.

Soon we heard the low quick sound of strange voices and the tread of their ponies on the opposite bank of the Platte. Now we hear them splash as they are forced into the wide shallow stream. We are becoming impatient, when in a low distinct voice we receive the command to charge.

Away we go, every man for himself, down from the bluffs, into the valley, across which we fly like the wind, and in a moment come to a dead halt on the river bank.

Then a shrill war whoop is heard on the opposite bank which is taken up by others and echoed from bluff to bluff, and in an instant the air is wild with the blood curdling whoop from a thousand warriors.

Now we hear the splashing of ponies plunging through the water, only a hundred yards distant coming toward us, and we open fire upon them, but we discover that they are riderless and are a part of their pack ponies which have escaped. We cease firing and they come out on the bank and are soon secured. Day is now dawning and we are astonished that all the buttes on the north side of the river are swarming with redskins.

We again open fire upon them with our Spencer carbine, and surprise them by throwing sand in their faces a mile away. They beat a hasty retreat to the back hills, and we string out along the river bank in line of battle. Our Wanibago scouts are now sent over the river to draw them within range of our guns. Once they charged upon our scouts from different points, but a well directed volley from our guns scattered them right and left through the bluffs, leaving behind them several dead bucks and some of their best ponies either killed or wounded.

Our force is small and we have too much property at stake to force them into an engagement, and hence our commander determined to act only on the defensive.

For several hours our Indian scouts, reinforced by the famous Bill Purdy and his scouts, kept up a running fight at long range, for it was impossible to get within pistol shot of them. For several hours the fight is kept up, and occasionally an Indian would fall, but he would immediately be thrown upon the back of a pony and carried off. Indians never let their dead or wounded fall into the hands of an enemy when it can be prevented. About 8 o'clock in the morning a large red flag or blanket was raised on the end of a tent pole on one of the highest bluffs, and then we can plainly see them hastening from every bluff in that direction. We are now confident that a hard battle is to be fought, with fearful odds against us. They were out of range of our guns, and for an hour we watched their movements with intense interest.

While we were thus engaged a prolonged war-whoop is heard in our rear on the bluffs through which we had passed only a few hours before. The yell was taken up by others on the neighboring hills and for a moment we are led to believe that we were entirely surrounded: We now turned our attention to the Indians in our rear, and without waiting for orders, started in hot pursuit through the bluff. A division of emigrant and transportation trains have come up and have corraled their wagons and secured their stock within the enclosure. We are somewhat reinforced in number by their force, and we feel reassured by their presence. The Indians were armed with bows and arrows, but occasionally an old musket gleamed in the sunlight and belched forth in tones of thunder from some far off bluff. They had a large number of old guns, but fortunately for us they were out of ammunition.

Once while a squad of our cavalry were in pursuit of several hundred warriors they were surprised by a band of seventy-five warriors who suddenly filed out from behind a hill and made a sudden dash upon them. Running within fifty yards and lying flat upon their ponies they discharged arrow after arrow under the necks of their ponies, which whizzed past the heads of our boys and fell harmless on the ground beyond. The cavalry returned the fire with their revolvers, and a chief of the band fled to the bluffs with his leg dangling helpless from his side.

While we were engaged in this skirmish the whole band of Souix crossed the river and went pell-mell for the hills, taking with them their women and children, and thus they escaped and crossed the great

Platte trail, and were safe again on the lonely desert on the way to Western Kansas on a grand buffalo hunt, where they load their ponies with meat for their winter supply and then return in the fall. In their flight they lost many robes and blankets, which were gathered up, but soon dropped again when the boys discovered they were alive with graybacks. Thus ended the battle of Old California Crossing, of which the Wheeling and all the West Virginia papers gave a glowing account under flaming headlines.

It was a big battle where we lost not a man nor captured an enemy, neither could we tell how many we had wounded and slain, for they were borne away by their comrades. We had, however, secured several poor old worn out ponies with old worn pack saddles, which we threw away as worthless.

This force of Indians were a part of the Sioux tribe and were commanded by the big chief, Standing Elk. During the following winter we made peace with this same tribe of redskins at Fort Laramie, W. T., where I became acquainted with Standing Elk, and found him a first-rate boy, but hard to get along cleverly with when drunk. I write the old man's historv further on.

For a few days we traveled on in company with several other trains, camping at night with a heavy guard around us, and marching by day, flanked by our Indian scouts and a detachment of our regiment. The third day after the fight we arrived at Julesburg, Colorado, afterward called Fort Sedgwick, in honor of General Sedgwick.

With Flinn, Cal, (our negro boy) and a comrade by the name of Wesley Howell, I wandered off the road some distance to a dog town whose suburbs ran down to the roadside. As we had been passing along we had seen hundreds of these little yellow pups sitting upon the holes, and had listened to their little weak bark. We had wasted hundreds of Uncle Sam's catridges upon them but had failed every time and now we determined upon a new plan. Drown them out, yes we could take a camp kettle and a few sacks, and of course soon get the sacks full. So on this bright morning we took with us these traps and after going half a mile from the road, we halted in the thickest part of the vast city of dogs and after stationing Cal upon a bluff to act as picket, we selected three holes, which appeared to connect under the ground. Two of these we stretched the mouths of our sacks over, Flinn holding one and I the other, while Howell poured the water which was dipped from a pool near by. For some time our efforts seemed lost and we were becoming discouraged when Flinn jumped clear of the ground and exclaimed:

"Holy Moses, me sack's full uv'em. I've got the father and mother and all the children—yes, be gorray, and we've bagged one of the fowls, too."

There was a commotion in Flinn's sack, and so he clinched its mouth with both hands and held it up, and we plainly heard the flapping of wings.

"There's a bird there sure, for divil the wings have dogs. Give me the end of the halter till I *fasten* them sufficiently—quick *if* not quicker——"

"Fo' millions ob Ingins," yelled Cal, as he dashed past us like a frightened wolf.

"Tain't no time to be foolin' heah boss, mount de ponies an' git, follow dis niggah for I'se gittin' I is," and he put spurs to his old pony and left us wondering what his strange actions could mean. But we didn't stop long to investigate; quickly straddling our mustangs and leaving the camp kettle for the dogs, we ran to a neighboring hill, and the sight that met our eyes made our blood run cold. We looked for a moment in the direction in which the command had marched, and we could see a dense cloud of dust, and scattered out on the bluffs were plainly visible a number of mounted men all on a dead charge, evidently chasing something, but what it was could not be seen. We never had seen such a cloud of dust before. The air was thick with it. The Sioux of "California Crossing" at once flashed before our minds, and we were confident that the boys were into it hot and heavy. But where were we? We could now hear shot after shot, and although they were several miles distant we thought we could hear the yells of the Indians.

"I'd give me dogs an' all the game in me sack if I could be wid the boys this minute, sure an' I would, bedad. Devil a bit would I left the road if I'd thought about the pesky redskins."

We all looked at Flinn as he spoke, and in spite of our hopeless situation we could not help but laugh when we discovered the old sack of prairie dogs which in his hasty retreat he still held on to.

Looking back we could see Cal, away in the distance, making rapid strides toward a wagon train six or eight miles back on the trail over which we had traveled.

Our situation seemed a little perilous, but after some deliberation we determined to pursue the regiment and if possible save ourselves by making what we thought would be a bold dash.

Seeing that our carbines contained seven catridges and that our Remington revolvers were in good fighting condition, we start in full tilt for the road. Reaching this we were entirely hidden from view by the dust. It was stifling, and once I thought my breath was gone and that I would surely choke to death. Running for some miles in this way and keeping well together, we suddenly come upon a man lying by the roadside, bleeding from several wounds. He was not dead, but wounded. We all stopped and supposing him to be one of our boys, we determined to save him if possible from falling into the hands of the enemy. He was so covered with dust that we could not recognise him, and we asked him who he was.

"Oh! Oh! 'ouch, I'm one of the 21st New York," he replied.

"What's the 21st doing here," we asked in surprise.

"Why this is Julesburg."

"Where's Julesburg?"

"Right ahead of you. Can one of you give me a drink?" And as I stooped to give him a pull at my canteen, Flinn remarked:

"Divil a drap of wather would I give any 21st New Yorker."

The dust had now cleared away and never were we more surprised than when we saw a dozen old dingy log huts and some tents and a vast rick of sacked flour and grain a hundred yards before us.

And then this was Julesburg, the "City of the Plains." But what was all this running for, and why these wounded men by the road side? It was some minutes before we could fully understand the situation.

The Twenty-first New York cavalry had reached this post a week before and had been lying in camp. They had not committed any robberies for some time simply for the want of something to rob, and they had concluded to raid on the sutler and commissary department. Our regiment happened to be approaching Julesburg just in time to nip their scheme in the bud. A messenger was dispatched, who met our command, and we arrived in time to save the post-trader. Several shots were exchanged and a few New Yorkers found quarters in the hospital.

The old French sutler felt very grateful and gave the boys a treat in the shape of whisky, tobacco and cigars.

Here we went into camp near the rick of flour, where we remained for four weeks,—the first night on our arms, as did the 21st. They had made threats which justified the opinion that an attack would be made upon us before morning and we determined to sell out at the highest market price. The next day the 21st were ordered to Salt Lake City, where they afterward committed depredations against the Mormons, and were finally mustered out, many of them, dishonorably with the loss of all pay and allowances. We saw a good many of them tramping their way back to the States with return bull trains, some of them ragged and all out of money and living like the wolves that follow these trains and eat the scraps left at their camping places.

"What have you in your sack?" asked a Lieutenant of Flinn, after the excitement was over.

"Sure we captured the gurgiss of the burrow, and all the city councilmin of the city beyant."

"What's that you've got?" said several voices at once, as a crowd gathered around Flinn, who never had once loosened his grip on the old sack.

"Bedad it's the father and mother and the whole litter of purps, and some burds wheech the sergeant an' mesilf drinched out uv a hole in the dog-town beyant, an' sure we'd a had every sack in the wagon train full entirely, if the pesky nagger hadn't lied about the Ingins. Bedad will some of yes get a cracker box 'til we cage the critters?"

A box was brought, and Flinn shook the contents of the sack into the cage. To the surprise of all a dead screech owl, a half suffocated prairie dog and a small rattlesnake fell into the box one after another.

"Och, bedad and the mother of Saints, kill the bloody varmit forthwith, immadiately," yelled Flinn at the top of his voice. "Sure if I'd know'd that monster of death was upon the inside of that sack, I'd a drapped it long afore I picked it up."

"I'll give the purp for the killin' of the schnake and swear by the mother of St. Patrick that I'll niver hould the sack agin as long as me name is Purdy Flinn."

At each of these government posts on the plains is a post-trader or sutler. His territory extends for the radius of five miles around the post, inside of which no other trader is allowed to transact business. He is appointed by the government authorities. The office is a fat one, and the man who is so fortunate as to get the post-tradership at these posts is a millionaire at once, no matter whether he has a dollar in the world or not. He will find plenty of rich Frenchmen there ready to furnish hundreds and thousands of dollars for an interest in the trade. Goods were sold at the time of which I write at enormous prices; $15,000 worth of goods could easily be converted to $100,000 in money in twelve months. Whisky which was the staple article in trade sold here at 50 cents per glass, and $15 to $30 per gallon, and found a ready market at that.

Tobacco sold at $5 per pound, and indeed at Fort Casper where we wintered it sold for as much as $10.

Cove oysters brought from $1 to $1.60 per pound cans. Peaches same price, while everything else was equally as high. Wood sold at from $40 to $60 per cord, but when we remember that it had to be hauled over one hundred miles on wagons we cannot wonder at that. The return trains brought wood from near Denver rather than return empty. Had it not been furnished in this way the cost would have been much higher. During our stay at this post we had many adventures, which will form the remainder of this chapter.

"Soldier, will you work?"

"No, I'll sell my shirt first."

This was a common expression among soldiers, but at Julesburg, it was more than common. Here, after a few days rest we were put to work at making sundried brick or adobes. A number of large Government buildings were to be erected for quarters, commissary departments, and stables.

This, the so called "City of the Plains" had arisen from the ashes. A short time before after a hard fought battle, the little town had fallen into the hands of hostile Indians who robbed the place of everything of value, and then laid it in ashes.

It was now being built up on a more substantial plan. Volunteers were called for, with a promise of being free from other duties, but the boys said: "No, I'll sell my shirt first" and the volunteer force was small but the brick must be made every morning. But even this failed of good results and the work was not pushed along as rapidly as was desired and absolutely necessary, so another plan was adopted. When the detail was made there was not a brick maker or a bricklayer in the camp, indeed they had never seen a brick made or a brick house built, they were raised in the mountains of Virginia, where they lived in log cabins—could build log houses if they wanted them; but "nary brick house." This was the way the boys talked when the officers came around hunting for bricklayers.

Of course they knew that there was not a log within one hundred miles of Julesburg, and of course no log huts could be built. But finally, as a last resort, $3 per day was offered for brick makers and $5 for layers. It was astonishing how many masons and brickmakers there were in that little camp. Even Cal and our good natured Irishman had both served a long apprenticeship at both, and Flinn was bold to boast that he could lay more brick, or carry a hod up more ladders than any living man. So the work went on and in a few weeks a half-dozen low one-story houses loomed up and gave the place the appearance of putting on city airs. Shingles could not be procured, and as a substitute poles and sage brush were first laid on and then a layer of gunny sacks, and last about six inches of dirt was thrown on, and the roof was complete. But it had to be replenished often, as the constant winds carried it off into the street. This was the kind of roofing used on all buildings in that country at that time.

Julesburg was at the crossing of the South Platte, where the road from Fort Laramie and all the posts in the northwest. and the Overland stage route from Denver City and beyond, formed a junction. It was a general "supply post," where long strings of wagon trains from Omaha and Leavenworth stopped and discharged thier freight.

For want of building or storehouse the flour and grain, which was all sacked, was piled in two enormous ricks or piles, and when I say "piles" I mean as large as a court house or Plymouth church—so many sacks indeed that it is doubtful whether the quartermaster himself knew just how many he had. To get at the value of this immense quantity, it is but necessary to say that flour was worth thirty dollars per hundred and corn (shelled) about six dollars.

Five miles below the fort was Reshcau's ranch. Reshcau was rich and was adding thousands to his already fabulous pile every month in the year. He had wealth coming in from various sources, and this grain and flour pile was his best hold. He would pay from $20 to $25 a sack for flour when delivered at his ranch—no matter at what hour of the night the goods arrived, he was always ready to transact business—especially when he knew that before the sun would sink behind Pike's Peak the next day, he would clear from $10 to $15 on every sack. This was soon noised around among the boys and the thing became very tempting. There was a guard kept constantly on duty at the ricks day and night, but it didn't take long to make a "silent partner" of him, with no capital invested. Myself and two comrades, Wes. Howell and Polk Worthington, were three honest boys(?). We wouldn't steal anything from Uncle Sam. Oh, no! not flour, anyhow! especially after he had hauled it six hundred miles in ox wagons, that would be naughty!—we did better than that; we organized ourselves into a vigilance committee to catch the rascals. The flour stealing went on all right for some time, and old Reshcau grew fat on handsome margins, in fact he had a "corner" on flour in that market. Down under the river bank, long after the little garrison had settled down to sleep, from two to four ponies were huddled together each night with a lone man in charge. Two or three other thieves would slip up through the sage brush to a point near the rick; then when the guard by a pre-arranged plan, had passed to the further end, each would shoulder a sack of flour and return quietly to the ponies and soon they were safe in the ranch of the old Frenchman, and the boys had their "returns" in their pockets and a jigger of whisky to boot.

Flinn and another party, concluded to organize a small foraging party of their own and share the profits equally.

The aforesaid vigilance committee got wind, one day, that Flinn would make a raid that night. The night was intensely dark, and we slipped out in good time. With carbine in hand, we wended our way down to near the ranch and close to the trail where we knew Flinn and his partner would pass. We took our position and lay down in the grass and waited patiently for some hours. We began to despair, when we heard a well known voice just under the river bank.

"Hould a bit ye blatherskite! Let me take a reconisence av the situation, an see af the trail is clear ferninst us."

The ponies were halted and the Irishman came creeping cautiously along until he could see the little black looking ranch, then, as if satisfied, he hastily returned and the two advanced.

On they came walking beside their ponies and holding the sacks in position until within a few paces of the spot where we were concealed. Just then Howell cocked his carbine and the click, click was plainly heard by Flinn, who was in advance.

"Whoa! Sthop a bit. Bedad I tho't I heard somethin'," and Flinn stopped his pony crouched down and surveyed the situation, over the top of the sage brush. We saw our opportunity and all rose up at once.

"Halt! Halt! Now, you thieves, we have got you," we sang out.

"Houly saints! save us," said Flinn, as he loosened his hold on the sack and jumped into the brush, followed by his frightened comrade.

Over the bank they went, and back to camp as fast as their trembling limbs would carry them. The ponies wheeled about, throwing the flour to the ground, and followed.

We now sat down near the sacks and held a conference. Here we were in possession of $60 worth of flour.

"It's too far to camp to carry it back," said Howell.

"That's a fact. It's much nearer to the ranch," suggested Worthington. "I'll tell you what to do, Sarge, you slip over to the ranch, see who is there and if the coast is clear, strike a trade with the old man—sorter get him to keep the sacks for us, you know, till we call for 'em."

So with many misgivings I ventured over and found the coast clear, and the old Frenchman on the lookout, evidently expecting a cargo to arrive. There was no one else there, except his old Snake squaw, whom he called his wife, so we soon struck a trade. I was compelled, however, to let him into the secret and give him a handsome margin to keep "mum."

The flour was soon delivered and we had $40 in cash and a plug of tobacco each. The money was a sort of security for the safe keeping of the goods until we should call for them. We soon slipped back to camp, and the next day it was amusing to see Flinn and a certain commissary sergeant sneaking around camp evidently expecting to be arrested every minute. Our consciences were soothed by the fact that Flinn and the sergeant never stole any more flour from Uncle Sam.

Antelope hunting is fine sport, but it requires a vast amount of patience and skill to capture these timed animals. There were plenty of them running in herds all over the plains near Julesburg, and we killed a great many of them. Two or three men would go in squads and take the guidon or company flag along. This was used to draw them in range of our guns. They have a great deal of curiosity and will examine everything strange to them. When we came in sight of a herd the flag-staff is stuck in the ground and we lay flat on the ground and await their coming—sometimes for hours before they will be attracted by it. As soon as they notice the flag, even a mile away, they will at once commence to move around it, each time bringing them nearer, until within shooting distance, when by a well directed fire several are sometimes killed at once. But we sometimes shot at them at long range, raising our sights to one thousand yards, but very seldom brought down our game.

Here we again suffered a disastrous stampede which came near dismounting the whole command. We had stretched a cable or picket line along several large posts, to which our ponies and mules were tied. One morning after roll call, while breakfast was being prepared, a small black cloud appeared in the West, at first no larger than a man's hand, but in ten minutes it spread all over the face of the heavens and before our "slap jacks" were fried we saw a commotion of the waters up the river and soon a hail storm was upon us. And such hail! We took refuge in our tents, but in a moment great hail stones, as large as goose eggs, came down and perforated our rotten tents like grape and canister. We covered our heads with saddles and boxes or anything which could afford protection. For a moment it seemed like God was angry and had opened the batteries of heaven upon us. Several men who had failed to reach shelter in time, were knocked down and badly injured.

Of course, no horse or mule would stand still and be pelted to death and as the fury of the storm increased hundreds broke their fastenings and commenced to rush frantically through camp, dodging, kicking and tearing down tents, leaving the boys exposed to the dreadful hail which now came down in all its fury. Other ponies who failed to break loose, turned tails to the storm and played base ball with their heels.

Our herd had nearly all succeeded in breaking loose and were now joined by others belonging to trains in camp near us. They got into a "mill" that is, they commenced crowding each other and running 'round and 'round and all pressing toward the centre. The storm only lasted a few moments and all this occurred in that time. But just as the storm abated and the hail ceased to come down upon us, the "mill" was broken by an old mule leaving the herd and dashing away, down the valley. He was instantly followed by another, then more, and the next minute all were sweeping down the plain and the camp was cleared. But we only have time to draw a long breath when we see them circle around and come pell mell, right down on the camp like a whirlwind.

CHAPTER VI.

In Pursuit of the Fugitives—We Discover Wild Horses—Wild Chase—The Old Trapper Gives Me the Locality of Antelope—A Desolate Scene, &c.—A Lone Hunt—Lost on the Desert—In Sight of an Indian Camp—Narrow Escape—"Swinging 'Round the Circle—Misplaced Confidence—"Platte River and Julesburg."

It was a moment of intense horror and which none of us will ever forget. On they swept, ropes flying, picket pins whizzing through the air like chain shot—some tangled together—now they plunged, blindly, into camp, crushing in our dugouts, tearing down tents, falling into sinks and pits, upsetting everything which lay in their path, crippling and mangling each other, and all this mingled with the shouts and frightened exclamations of the boys who were vainly struggling to dodge one pony only to be knocked down by another, or save themselves by blows from sabre and carbine. I never expected, nor do I desire to witness such a scene of consternation again. The frantic herd now leave the bottom and fly to the bluffs and we know that before many days the Indians will be riding our mules and ponies on the bloody war-path. We take a look through the ruins and to our surprise, find but few men hurt and none killed. Many horses, however, were killed or rendered useless and had to be shot. A small squad of ponies, during the heat of the stampede, crossed the river and dashed away up the stream and soon disappeared in the distance. We at once organized into squads and gathering all the stock together we could find, soon started in pursuit. It was rather a hazardous undertaking for we well knew that large bands of hostiles were lurking in the vicinity of the post, and of course we went well prepared for defense.

With a small but brave squad of a half dozen men I crossed the river and went in pursuit of the fugitives who had gone to the buttes of Dakota. We traveled all day over an unbroken waste prairie as desolate as the plains of Arabia, and about 4 o'clock came in sight of a beautiful valley whose wide green bottom spread out before us and presented a splendid view after a day's ride over prickly pears and wild sage. We ride to the top of an eminence, and away yonder in the distance so small at first that we could not tell whether they were ponies or antelopes, we discern a drove, we cannot tell of what.

We go down into the bottom, through deep rich grass which has grown, untouched by man or beast. We lose sight of the herd which we have sighted and are soon compelled to seek a bluff in order to get a view of the past plains before us. Again we see our herd, and this time see that they are our runaway stock. We make haste and soon come upon them. Great was our astonishment to see standing in the midst of the gang several large fat and sleek ponies, all strangers to us. We had been told that wild ponies had been seen in this vicinity but had not believed it. We all at once commenced to lay claim to the strays, as we supposed them to be.

"The black is mine," said one of the boys, as he began to prepare his lasso for a throw.

"The spotted horse belongs to me," yelled another, but before we approached within two hundred yards, they shot out from among our heard and dashed up the plain. We started in hot pursuit, all swinging our lariats, but before we ran a mile the wild ponies were in the bluffs and lost to sight. They presented a fine contrast as they stood among our old worn out mules and ponies. The boys formed a resolution that they would return and capture them at some future time. It was near daybreak when we drove the renegade ponies across the river and into camp, many of these were stiff and so crippled that they barely made the trip. We lost heavily in this stampede, and several days passed ere we had recovered two-thirds of our stock.

When these stampedes occurred we always found a large number of stray mules or ponies who got with our stock away out on the plains where they may have been running wild for months and perhaps years. Of course we were always on the watch for strays. On this occasion several mules and ponies were picked up, who looked as if they might have been running wild for years. A small mule made his appearance with a heard of stragglers which were driven in, and from the appearance of his hoofs which had grown out long, as well as his mane and tail, I concluded he didn't belong to anybody, so I got a partner and we proceeded at once to capture him. This we found to be an ugly job. We could not get close enough to him to throw a lasso. So we took two lassoes and after tying them together formed a large ring of the noose upon the ground into which we put corn. This would not do, he had doubtless seen such traps before.

"You see, Youngster, I've Been in These Parts Nigh onto Twenty Years."

But we put a decoy there. We got another old mule to draw him on by eating the corn. Finally after we had fed up the rations of several horses to the old mule who seemed to enjoy the joke, the little donkey was persuaded to step up and into the ring. We hauled in both mules. We then threw a rope over his head and had him fast. We kept him tied to the picket line for a few days and said nothing. This was customary and was considered a legal advertisement of a stray. If no owner called and claimed him after the first two or three days, the title was good—at least as good as the old rascal down at the ranch cared about, and he always took in all stock of this kind when he was sure he would make 160 per cent on the investment. This mule came near costing me my life.

I determined to go on a "still hunt," or rather a lone hunt, with no one with me but the old mule as a companion, and accordingly sought out an old trapper whom I had heard talk of wonderful hair-breadth escapes and thrilling adventures with red-skins and grizzly b'ars in the mountains beyond. I found him and at once made my intention known, and asked for information as to the best direction to take and the locatity for antelope.

"Wal, if its antelope yer arter, why I'm the chap that can shoot yer on a bee line to the very spot. Yer see youngster I've been in these parts nigh onto twenty years and I've crossed the length of this trail more nor that many times. I've showed Kit Carson many a trick that he never would have knowed, and I've saved old Bridger from the Indians more nor onst, but youngster, yer wants to know where the critters use, so I'll tell yer so yer kent miss the shoot. Yer squint that pint to the West, 'bout two miles—yer do? all right go thar. Turn squar to the South and make a straight shirt tail up the canyon fur three miles. Then plant yer carcass on a noles and squint for bucks. Deer? Oh, not deers; Injuns, Sioux I mean. Yer see I dont know as thar's any skulkin' 'round, but keep yer peepers open, case there likely is, seein' as the mail coach was struck at the Sand Hill Buttes a few days ago—wal, when yer don't see nothin', skin out fur the peak you see five miles south—can see as fur as yer peepers can squint—till yer reach the peak, then follow the gulch down till yer see a bunch of trees with stiffs in the branches—stiffs? don't know what stiffs be? Why dead Injuns. That's whar they entertain their defunct members. Thar's several salt licks thar, stake yer broncho to windward of the lick then plant yerself and wait. Kill more skippers thar in an hour than yer can tote to camp with a hull caravan of mules."

I choked him off by thanking him for the information and hastened to saddle the mule which we had taken up as a "stray" a few days before. My curiosity was some what aroused by the tale of the old blarney, and I had the route and location so vividly in my mind that I was positive I would be able to go direct to the spot, and once there, shoot down a fine, fat antelope and return to camp. I soon had the old mule packed with the few things I thought I would need, and taking my Spencer carbine and Remington revolver, I was soon under way. I had told no one but the old ranger of my intention, and but few questions were asked. Taking the overland trail I followed the caynon to the head. There I came out on a high plain, so vast in extent that looking to the west I could see as far as the eye could reach, but the "peak" was nowhere to be seen. However away in the south could be seen a rough, broken country, with several small bluffs, which might be called "peaks" and for these I started. I had seen many barren plains since leaving the Missouri river, but this scene which spread out before me was the most desolate I had ever looked upon.

The little donkey moved along very nicely and I congratulated myself upon my good fortune in being a half owner in such a valuable mule. After traveling for several hours up a rough canyon then across a vast, hot, sandy desert, I reached a small stream which I at once concluded was the gulch. I guessed that I was now not less than fifteen miles from camp and although I had thought but little of danger, I all at once became very uneasy and wondered why I had allowed myself to be fooled in such a manner.

Once on my way, I had seen a few objects so far away that I could not tell what they were but supposed them to be antelope, but they had disappeared and now I had fears that they might have been Indians. I had reached the head of a canyon which ran down to what appeared to be a narrow valley covered with green grass through which flowed a clear fresh stream and I now began to approach very cautiously. The plain over which I had traveled was strewn with cactus plants so thick that my mule could scarcely find his way through them, and I had not expected any game to be found upon such a desolute waste, but now as I looked down into the little green valley before me I said to myself; "Surely there must be antelope here." Just then my attention was attracted to something I had just gotten a glimpse of over the bluff, and quick as thought I threw myself flat upon the mule's neck. He came to a dead halt. Then his tail gave a few quick jerks, his ears came together until their tips touched then there was a perceptible movement in his back, and he assumed the shape of a rainbow.

My position was uncomfortable. It was like riding a grindstone. In spite of my desperate prods with the two Mexican spurs upon my heels and the vigorous jerks at the bridle rein, his head would stay down and his back up. From my elevated position, I got one glimpse of a large herd of antelope running at full speed down the valley, and thought that I caught a faint view of ponies with saddles on them, grazing some distance away, but it was like a momentary dream. Before I had time for thought the heels of the donkey flew up and his spine gave an extra bow, and he seemed to be walking on his ears. Had my face been turned the opposite direction I thing I could have held my position and baffled his efforts, for I could then have held on to his tail. In that short moment I learned which was the business end of a mule. Well, of course the crisis came and the ground flew up and hit me on the flat of the back, so it appeared from my standpoint—or rather my lay point. This was not the end. Oh! no, if it could have ended here I could have easily forgiven the mule, for I felt that this was no time or place for making enemies not even with an ass. In my descent I became entangled in the long rope which was wrapped loosely around his neck, and to add to my discomfort he took particular pains to land me in a thick patch of prickly pears, nor did he let up at that. Before I could extricate myself from the lasso he deliberately turned and kicked square at my head. But he shot high and I hugged the cactus burrs without feeling a sting as the thorns were buried deep into my flesh.

The mule now doubtless thought he had done the work for me, and he now commenced to plow the sand with my prostrate form, dragging me feet foremost. My bleeding hands grasped every tuft of grass, and every prickly pair which was in reach, but they all pulled up and the plowing went on. Luckily he didn't move fast; but fast enough for me. I didn't want to go any faster on that coach. Of course I was angry, but I felt willing to forgive the mule if he would onlp stop until I could release myself and I tried by soft words to convince him of the fact, but he didn't stop. I felt for my revolver determined to end the fun at once by shooting him; but my revolver had slipped from its scabbard and was out of reach. In despair I almost gave up, for I was certain the mule would soon run, and I knew that my by-laws and constitution could never stand that.

Oh how I wished for a tree, or a fence post around which to lock my arms, and pull the mule's neck off, but there was no tree in a hundred miles of the place. But all things have an end except eternity. The donkey stopped to kick a cactus burr loose from his fetlock, and I took advantage of the stop and kicked myself loose from the rope.

I then seized the pin and with a dexterous stamp of my heel sent it into the ground up to the ring, then I stood upon it. The mule gave a little pull, found he was fast, then turned, and as I thought smiled at me, thus adding insult to injury. I now thought I knew why the mule was found adrift on the plains. His master had given him a dishonorable discharge.

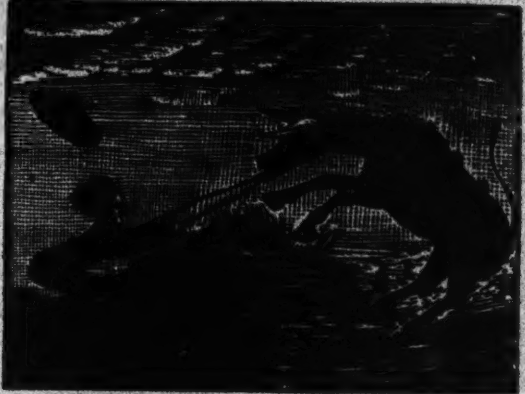
I was now mad, and I told the mule so in a long abusive address, delivered there where no human could hear it. But I now think that I was wasting my breath upon the desert air, for my after acquaintance with that muleconvinced me that he was not over sensitive and that he was quite dull of apprehension and could not take a hint without a kick, and not even that without returning the compliment.

I was going to shoot the mule as soon as I could get my gun, but the question arose, how could I kill my half without injuring my partner's half—which end of the old thing was mine and which was his? Then when I remembered that I was fifteen miles from camp and in a bad condition to walk I concluded to put off the execution until some future time.

By cautious coaxing I deceived the brute into the belief that the past was forgiven, and I succeeded in getting a hold upon the bridle. Then I led him back along the furrow which he had plowed, until I came to my carbine and revolver. I now proceeded to curry him down with the gun until sympathy overruled justice and I let up, much to the satisfaction and delight of the mule.

With many misgivings I mounted again upon the bowed back of the mule, not however, until I had drawn from my flesh something less than a thousand long sharp thorns. All thought of antelope or any other game had left my mind and I turned my attention toward camp. I had proceeded but a few miles out on the desert when the awful fact dawned upon me that I was lost. I stopped and tried in vain to come to some definite conclusion as to the locality of Julesburg, but for my life I could not tell north from south, or whether camp was north or east. O, how I wished for my faithful pony. He could be trusted to retrace his steps without a shadow of a variation, but the blasted mule could not be trusted at all.

After taking a survey of the bluffs in the distance and the horizon I took my bearing and determined to trust to instinct. I soon found that instinct in a man was not as good as in a wild goose. Again I became bewildered and now greatly alarmed at the thought of stay-ing all night on that barren waste, a prey to wolves or a victim to some roving band of Indians. I had been going on a lope for some time making as good speed as possible when I suddenly came upon a deep gulch and looking farther on I could see more of them and it was plain to me that I was getting out of the wilderness. I believed that these canyons would lead to the Platte river and I at once started to follow the direction in which they led. An hour before I had seen my bones bleaching in the hot sun stripped of their flesh by ravenous wolves, and my scalp dangling from the belt of some bloody warrior, I had thought of my home away east in the hills of Ohio, and wondered if they would know my fate. But now all was changed, and I felt that I would soon be with the boys in camp and sit down to a good mess of slap jacks and beans and relate the adventures of the day.



He was Wound up for Twenty-four Hours.

I had by this time reached a point which looked over a rough broken territory, sloping down to a large woodless stream along which could be plainly seen a broad trail and away yonder, so faint as to be almost invisible to the naked eye, are a few small houses, around which are visible a few little white dots, and I exclaimed aloud: "Platte river and Julesburg." I now start to descend the bluff and all at once I come in sight of a half-dozen fine fat antelope just below me in a hollow. They had not observed my approach, and I at once turned my mule to one side and got out of sight.

Here now is a chance for a shot, and may be an antelope to carry home as a trophy of a day's adventures. I prepare to dismount. Throwing my carbine over my shoulder I gently lowered myself to the ground. No sooner had my foot found a resting place than the mule commenced to revolve by making a pivot of his hind legs. First he revolved slowly, and I held on to the bridle, thinking, of course, he would soon run down and stop, but he didn't. He was wound up for twenty-four hours, and he kept on going; so did I, and the speed soon began to increase until I could only touch the high places, and finally my feet left the ground altogether, and I was flying through the air in a horizontal position at the rate of several hundred per minute. This went on for some minutes, so it seemed to me, and I suppose I would have been swinging around the circle yet had the bridle not given away, for I did not dare to let loose. But I felt something give and I closed my eyes. Then the rein broke and I went like a thunderbolt down an embankment, over and over, and finally fetched up at the bottom of the ravine. I felt that I had stopped but now everything else begun a general moving around. Gradually the panorama ceased and I hunted up my scattered effects and determined to let antelope go, let the mule go—everything go, and go myself, to camp—if I could possibly get there. I soon overtook the mule, and determined again to effect if possible a treaty of peace; but he wouldn't treat. I approached him holding out my hand as a decoy, but remembering the lamming of an hour before, he started on a dead run and left me, this time for good. When I got my gun I set out for camp, following in the wake of the donkey. Once again he stopped allowing me to approach and I concluded he would surrender. I could have caught his tail but was afraid of a tail hold, so he moved on and left me again. It was the most aggravating experience I had ever had. My feet were sore from being rubbed by stiff boots, and I was beginning to hobble along with great difficulty when I saw the saddle blanket fall from the old mule and I hailed it as a Godsend.

I soon pulled off my boots, and wrapped up my feet with pieces of the blanket and started on with renewed hope. The shades of night are drawing on when tired and sore I stand upon a point a half mile from the trail and see the east bound stage pass. Waving the remnant of my old blanket I tried to stop it but the old driver and the escort did not want to be entrapped by a decoy, and they whipped up and left me alone.

Worn out and sick I arrived at camp long after dark, and found everybody in a fever of excitement. The old mule had made his appearance with blood on the saddle, (which came from my scratches) and the stage men reported seeing what they were certain was a decoy on the bluffs six miles up the road.

CHAPTER VII.

The Troops Who Were on the Plains in 1865—Guarding a Paymaster Through an Enemy's Country—"We'll Camp There To-Night"—How the Boys Were Fooled—The Indians Kill One of Our Boys—The Wolves in Camp, &c., &c.—A Sergeant of Company "K" is Killed by Indians—How the Indians Won the Pony—And Lost it Again—Sioux Stampede the Cattle, but the Virginia Boys in Blue Save the Herd.

The next day after the antelope hunt, related in last Chapter, a band of Indians made a raid on a wagon train some miles above Julesburg, killing a number of teamsters and running off a large number of cattle. They came from the direction of the little valley, where I thought I had gotten a glimpse of ponies with saddles on them, just as the old mule elevated me, and I was convinced that the mule in trying to kill me, had unintentionally saved my life; for had I fired one shot there, I would have been skinned alive the next minute.

I felt a new love for the poor old ass spring up, but it came too late —we had parted company forever. The old Frenchman at the ranch had taken him for the modest sum of $75.

The troops on the plains during this summer and the winter followlowing numbered about nine thousand. They were composed of the 11th Ohio Cavalry, 6th Michigan Cavalry, 6th West Virginia Cavalry, 21st New York Calvary, 7th Nebraska Calvary, 1st and 2nd California Cavalries and 22d Colorado Calvary, 3d U. S. Infantry, the latter was commanded by Colonel Manidier. They (the 3d U. S. Infantry) were recruited from among prisoners at Camp Chase at the close of the Rebellion. They were dubbed "Galvanized Soldiers," by the other troops on the plains; however they did good service and suffered many privations and deserve due praise.

Beside the troops mentioned, about 600 Indians were also enlisted, and doing volunteer service for the Government. With these Indians their white officers always had trouble to prevent them from the barbarous habit of "scalping" their victims, or the dead hostiles who fell into their hands.

The troops mentioned were distributed over a vast area of territory, embracing Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, Dakota, Wyoming, Montana, and Utah. Each fort, block house, stage station, telegraph or mail station, was guarded by cavalry or infantry troops, as the danger, locality or place demanded. Our force at Julesburg was soon divided up into small squads and sent out to different posts along the routes, and we did not all get together again until we formed a reunion at Fort Leavenworth the spring following.

One detachment under an orderly Sergeant by the name of Shaw, was sent as an escort for a train load of provisions for the Ute Indians away up in the Rocky Mountains, while another under Lieutenant J. Will Myers, a brave young officer, was dispatched to Sand Hill Station, in Colorado, to assist in repelling a force of hostile Indians under the chief "Hatchet Face." This force had a hard fight, and lost several men, whose names I now forget.

Another detachment of our command was sent to Willow Springs, in Dakota, as an escort to a paymaster. This detachment was, I think, under H. W. Brazle. The writer was with this escort. This was an important as well as hazardous mission. The paymaster had the pay for several months for a number of regiments, and a few months previous a paymaster had been attacked on this very road and killed, scalped and robbed, and most of his small and inefficient escort fell victims to Indians or road agents in Indian guise.

We cross South Platte at Julesburg and leave the great overland stage route. It is about three hundred miles from this place to Fort Laramie, Wyoming territory. The road leads through a barren desolate country, untouched by agricultural implements, so desolate and dreary that the heart sickens at the sight, and the eye becomes weary with looking upon the barren bluffs and hot dry alkaline desert through which the road passes. At the time of which I write, there were but four houses along the route from Julesburg to Fort Laramie. These were ranches owned by Frenchmen, at which is a telegraph station and a postoffice, and all these with the soldiers' quarters under one roof, or very near to each other.

The mails were carried by pack mules or ponies which were driven through from one station to another under a mounted guard. This was the duty assigned to all cavalry along the route, and we had our share of it during the cold winter which followed.

All the game the boys killed along the way was so flavored with wild sage that it could hardly be eaten, especially the sage hen, a large bird much like the prairie chicken.

The little stations along the route had been but poorly guarded, and as a result had been subjected to a vast number of attacks by Indians, during the summer of '65, and a large number of men had been slain either at or near these stations, or while en route with the Salt Lake mail. A good many massacres of emigrants also occurred, and a vast number of cattle and other stock had fallen into the hands of the ever watchful and vigilant redskin.

In fact the Indians had been stalking almost unmolested over Uncle Sam's domain, and our regiment was hailed by the few soldiers along the route, who had been holding their lives in their hands, with demonstrations of joy which they did not attempt to conceal.

Only a few days before we arrived in Julesburg, an attack had been made on the block house at Willow Springs, and a siege of several days ensued.

The handful of men there fought like Turks and held the place against fearful odds. They saved the garrison but lost their stock. During this fight the Indians placed a white woman—a captive—in front every time an advance was made on the fort, and this kept the soldiers from firing upon them as effectually as they could have done had it not been for fear of killing the poor woman.

In this engagement, which lasted three days, the Indians lost heavily, while the soldiers, under shelter of the blockhouse, lost but two men.

At the beginning of the siege the Indians cut the "Talk-a-heap," as they called the telegraph wire, and this cut off all communication with the outside world.

The first night after leaving Julesburg, we camped at Pole Creek, a new station just established. The logs had not yet arrived from the blockhouse. We found about fifty of the Eleventh Ohio Calvary here in tents expecting every day to be served up for breakfast for a hoard of Sioux Indians, who were reported in that section.

A telegraph office had been established, which was located in a small dog tent and the instrument attached to a tailgate of a wagon lying flat upon the grass. The operator in order to attend to official business, crawled in on his hands and knees but had to crawl out again to turn around. He was a soldier. All operators on the plains were enlisted men. No citizens could be induced to live there voluntarily. When a soldier learned to operate he was assigned an office with a princely salary, but had to find a substitute before he could leave or be relieved and but few men cared to volunteer, but had to be pressed into service. One operator of Platte Ridge on the North Platte, had been a prisoner in that office for five years. His term of enlistment had long since expired but he was still held—partly by force, and partly by increased pay, and the many opportunities for making a "million."

The next morning we move again and soon reach the foot of the Dry Ridge, or Alkili Desert. Here we were ordered to fill our canteens with fresh water from a bright clear spring near the roadside, and give our ponies all they could drink for it is forty miles across the desert and not a drop of water in all that distance. Over this vast salt field but little vegetation grows and the air is dry and salty. parching the lips and creating an unnatural thirst which nature has neglected to provide for. All along the entire distance the way is strewn with the carcasses of cattle and mules which have died of thirst or heat. Although many of them had lain here for many years. they were in a comparatively well preserved state, the coyotes had eaten out the inside, leaving the frame and skin in a dried and perfect condition.

It was a common thing to see two or three wolvas crawl out of these carcasses and run for life across the prairie generally followed by a dozen or more soldiers all shooting revolvers at them at once. We passed a poor old fox, who had given out on the way and had been turned out to die. A gang of coyotes had attacked him and were about to wind up his sufferings when we came in sight, and they fled, and we ended his misery by shooting him on the spot.

We had journeyed on slowly all day long, the sun had dropped low down in the western horizon and we presented the appearance of having passed through a shower of fine salt. Horses and riders were all one color—white.

We had been riding along for hours in utter silence wondering if the desert would never end. Our canteens had long since been emptied and our ponies began to show signs of thirst and exhaustion, when just beyond us suddenly looms up like a vision, what appears to be a gigantic house with a tall spire pointing far up into the clouds.

An exclamation of wonder burst from the whole command. Never were men more surprised. It was a diversion which served at once to relieve the monotony and help us forget our sufferings.

"We'll stop at the house to-night," said one of the boys.

"It can't be but a few miles away," said another.

"Boys." says Lieutenant Brasie, "that is Court House Rock, and it is thirty miles distant. We'll camp under the shadow of that rock to-morrow night, if the indians don't head us off."

"Thirty miles away! It can't be possible," said several of the men, who would have bet on their carbines shooting into the very dome of the great Sham Court House.

"Yes, it is a big day's march for us," replied the Lieutenant who had been posting himself as to the scenes along the road.

Several men wanted to bet $50 and give their note payable "on or before next pay day," that he was mistaken on that point, but the Lieutenant already held their paper for all money due them from the United States, so no bets were taken.

As the great rock disappeared in the fast approaching darkness, a little light gleamed forth away down in the little valley at our feet and a thrill of joy shot through every breast, for we knew we were approaching Willow Springs and would soon bathe in the clear sweet waters of the little stream which flowed through the valley. This was the scene of the fight described above.

This blockhouse was a fac simile af all others along this route and a description of it will suffice for them all. It is of pine logs built in a hollow square and about 50x75 feet. It has two rows of bunks inside, one above another, with two rows of port holes. Each man has a number which corresponds with the number of his port hole, which is just above his bunk. His gun is kept in the rack over this hole and is ready for use at a moment's notice. On top is a "watch tower," a low structure where a guard is kept on duty day and night. This watch house is bullet proof and it is as safe there as inside the building. At a signal of danger from the guard in his lofty position, every man immediately rushes to his port hole and in an instant the yawning muzzle of a musket bristles forth from every opening. This was the reception we met with on our arrival on the evening in question. As soon as we could make it appear to the satisfaction of these soldiers that we were not redskins, but friends, they drew in their guns, and threw open the large gate of the enclosure and gave us a cordial welcome. Here we found some of the 6th Michigan Cavalry, 11th Ohio Cavalry, 3d U. S. Infantry and a few of our Winebago scouts who had left us on our arrival at Julesburg.

Early next morning a few of us went up the creek a short distance to see an ancient Sioux Cemetery, or a place where the Indians had used to deposit their dead. We found a beautiful little grove of scrub oaks and cottonwood trees, which looked grand to our eyes after being so long out of sight of timber.

The grove had been held sacred by the Sioux as a burying place, and it was told us that they used to convey their dead upon the backs of ponies for a hundred miles in order to give their dead warriors a good send off to the happy hunting grounds, from this charming spot.

But there had been no interments here for some years, owing to the fact of the blockhouse being built so near. On the limbs of every tree were the remains of those who had long gone over the "dark Indian river." The place had about it a certain gloomy aspect as wind sighed through the leaves and ruffled the old rags and skins, which hung in shreds from every limb. These were the winding sheets and shrouds of the dead, whose bodies had long since been devoured by the long winged raven which sailed around the spot adding to the scene a certain melancholy and gloom. Under the trees, the ground was strewn with bones of every part of the human body. Ghastly skulls with upturned faces, stared at us from every side. Then too, there were many curious relics under the trees, such as arrow heads, old gun barrels, and stone pipes, many of which, with bones for making finger rings, the boys gathered up and carried off.

But the sound of the bugle called us and we were soon on our way to Fort Laramie, having received a telegram to proceed with the paymaster to that Post.

Fort Laramie was several hundred miles further Northwest, and we now began to realize that our final destination and winter quarters is in the Rocky mountains.

We have to pass through a country rough and rugged, along the North Platte abounding with many curious scenes and swarming with hundreds of hostile Indians.

As we proceeded on our march we began to see how badly we had been deceived in the distance to Court House Rock, and we find that objects in this country appear much nearer in the evening than morning.

As our Lieutenant had said, we camped under this rock the first night after we left Willow Springs. As we approaced we could see plainly the figures of several of our men who had gone on before and ascended to the very dome of the "Capital." Although they were many miles away, and did not look larger than a man's thumb, yet each one could be recognized, so clear was the atmosphere. But while we were gazing upon the grand scene a curtain of mist spread over its crest and for a moment it was hid from our vision. Then it cleared away and we could plainly hear the shouts and see the boys waving their hat just under the passing clouds.

That night we caught hundreds of small fish from a brooklet which flowed at the foot of this great rock, and all night long we listened to the whooping of Indians several miles north of us who seemed to be having a war dance. Then to add to the gloom a pack of hungry white wolves set up a wail of woe and we had to abandon the thought of sleep and take our places among our ponies in order to prevent a stampede and protect our ponies from the gang of ravenous wolves.

It was a gloomy night, and just a little foretaste of what is to follow a few months hence in the mountain country beyond.

Our next day's march brought us to Chimney Rock, another wonder of the plains, but we had a man killed and scalped by Indians during the day, in sight of several of our men who were helpless to render assistance, although they did everything possible to save him. We must not pass without giving some of the particulars connected with this, for he was the first man we had killed and scalped by Indians.

A few men belonging to companies "H" and "K" had, contrary to orders straggled behind, and getting out of sight, they left the trail and rode some miles through the bluffs, toward the Platte river. They were in quest of antelope which they soon found. Of course an exciting chase took place, and one of the boys, a Sergeant, became separated from the rest and ran some miles down the river in hot pursuit of a herd of game.

A band of Indians concealed in the thick brush upon the river bank lay quietly in waiting until he approached, when a shot from one of them pierced his heart and he fell dead. Not, however, without being seen by one of his comrades who saw him fall and summoning his other companions, they rushed to the rescue but too late. The redskins had scalped and stripped him of all his weapons, taking his saber but leaving the scabbard behind. Although there were a score or more of them they fled to the hills leaving the boys in possession of the dead body of their comrade. Perplexed as what to do under the circumstances, the men finally decided to cover the body up, and report to the command at once. A blanket was thrown over the mutilated corpse, and the men came with all haste and reported the sad fate. A detachment was at once sent back, who buried him where he fell. This served to put the boys on the alert, and ever after we were more vigilant and discreet.

From the rugged appearance of the country along this portion of the North Platte, we conclude that we have crossed the plains and are now approaching the mountains.

We have crossed Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado a corner of Dakota and are well into Wyoming. We have found abundance of small game, but as yet we have not seen one live buffalo. Here we began to find the country more fertile, especially in the valleys and bottoms along the river.

It was now the latter part of September and we found the nights cold and chilly and heavy coats and blankets add much to our comfort.

The shades of night were settling around as we ascended a bluff and found ourselves within one mile of Scott's Bluff. This place is surrounded by a mystery and interest. It was the hiding place of "Green River" the young road agent.

We had, long before we reached here, heard of how many trains had been stopped and plundered. Cattle and horses stampeded and run off. Returning Californians were waylaid and forced to turn over their hard earned "dust," and not long before, a paymaster was forced to hand out $60,000 of Uncle Sam's money to a band of Indians who all spoke plain English. It was said that Green River was the leader of this band, and that Captain Shuman's men, a company of the Eleventh Ohio Cavalry, camped at Fort Mitchell, just beyond were his confederates in some of these daring deeds, especially the mail robberies.

Then we had been told of caves somewhere within these vast lava beds, where desperadoes, Green River and his gang, lived in peace and security.

All these stories which had been told us by soldiers and half-breed Indians along the route, threw around the place a romance which we found increased as we drew near to the great, rough, shapeless pile of rock through which the road passed.

Approaching from the east, the road winds around deep canyons and ravines. As we enter the pass we are ordered to draw revolvers and keep close together. High rugged cliffs form a wall on either side of the pass, and as our ponies tread upon the hard road the walls give forth a deep hollow sound which fills the place with a solemn awe.

Our paymaster glanced into every crack and crevice as he rode in advance of his ambulance. We had been told not to stop in the pass, but that we might return and view the scenery after our paymaster had been lodged at Fort Mitchell.

We go through in more than ordinary haste always on the alert for any road agent or band of Indians who might cast their shadows across our pathway.

We arrive at the west end of the pass after traveling for fifteen minutes in a dusky, gloomy darkness and the welcome rays of the setting sun fall across our pathway once more.

Then Fort Mitchell dawns upon us. We had heard much of this post and the 11th Ohio boys, who held the fort. Nestled away down in a horseshoe curve of the North Platte, we can see the smoke curling up from a half-dozen chimneys and see the long rows of port holes in the sides of the low dismal walls, reminding us of some ancient castle, or perhaps a picture we have seen somewhere.

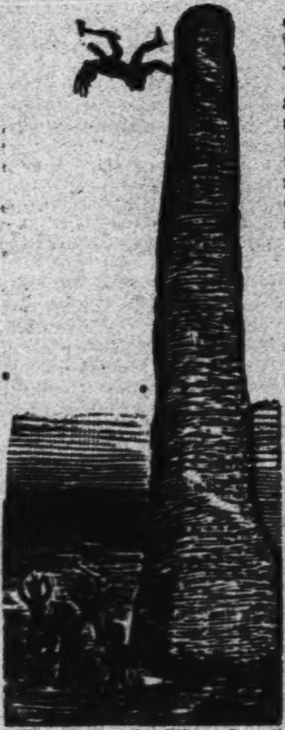
Notwithstanding the tales we had heard of how these boys plundered everybody who passed or camped in that locality, we left next morning with a good opinion of them, and feeling assured that they had been lied upon.

We camped the next night at Chimney Rock, which stands back three miles from the river at the foot of the sand bluff and there are no other indication of rock for many miles around it. At this point on the Platte was another blockhouse called Chimney Rock station, and guarded by twenty-five men of the Third U. S. Infantry. Viewing the rock from the station it resembles an old furnace stack standing alone like a great obelisk. Its height is 170 feet, and from the vast quantity of sand at its base we judge at one time it was much higher.

It was told us that at one time a band of Sioux passing there, an offer was made by the Chief, of a pony to the young brave who would climb to the pinnacle and stand upon it. Several fruitless attempts were made but finally a daring young buck succeeded by cutting niches with his tomahawk in reaching its dizzy height, but just as he was in the act of standing upon the top, his moccasin slipped and down he came. Had he found a soft place upon which to light he would have won the broncho and perhaps been made a chief and then married the old chief's daughter and all that, but he struck the ground too hard, and so he gave up the ghost—and the pony too. But the old chief did the next best thing he could. He erected a scaffold, wrapped the dead Indian up in all his available assets, and wythed him fast on top of the scaffold, then he killed the pony which the poor fellow had lost his life in winning, and placed its carcass under the scaffold for the dead warrior to ride on his hunts in the happy hunting grounds. We looked about for the scaffold and thought we found evidences of it in the shape of rotten wood and small bits of hides.

The afternoon of the day on which we left the great Chimney Rock we reached Fort Laramie, the great supply post of the North Platte. As we came in sight of it, we could discern in the distant west a great peak looming up like one of the pyramids of Egypt. Just behind it appeared a long chain of black mountains, so far away and dim to naked eye that we could not tell whether they were really mountains or clouds. But we soon learned that the peak was Laramie Peak and the mountain in the rear was a chain of the Rockies. So this was our first glimpse of the Rocky Mountains. We did not think then that before two months would pass we would be wading through snow drifts and climbing over rocks and crags in the very heart of these mountains, but so it was.

Laramie had recently been the scene of a great number of raids, made by roving and straggling bands of Sioux and Cheyenne Indians.



"His moccasin Slipped and down he came."

The place for four weeks previous to our arrival had been held by infantry, all the cavalry having gone to the Powder River expedition under General Sulley.

These Indians seemed to know this, and took advantage of the situation, and almost every day a stampede of the herd belonging to the post was attempted, and they always succeeded in running off some cattle or horses, while the infantry, of course, could not follow with much success.

A few days after our arrival with the paymaster, the remainder of our regiment came on from Julesburg with our wagon train.

We were now put on duty at this Fort as herders, mail-runners, scouts, guards, in fact all the duties performed by cavalry in that country. The day of our arrival a band of Indians had struch a small herd of cattle belonging to a passing train, and succeeded in getting away with about fifty of them.

The day following, after we had gone into camp, and settled down for a short stay, the attempt was repeated. We had our ponies all staked near our tents and were expecting to be called out at any minute. Some of our boys were on duty as herders with several Frenchmen and half-breeds, regular herders. We had watched from our camp the bluffs all the morning for the appearance of Indians, when in a twinkle a painted band of Sioux filed out of a ravine and succeeded ceeded by a bold dash in cutting off a few straggling cattle from a small herd belonging to a transportation train in camp below the fort. There was not the usual war whoop, but the thing was done in five minutes and in a very systematic way.

In an instant all was in confusion about the Fort and everybody watched the new Cavalry camp to see what would be done there. No sooner were the Indians seen than every man rushed for his pony, and in two minutes we were mounted and in hot pursuit.

There were no orders issued, no red tape about the thing, every man for himself.

The Indians were surprised. They had not been posted as to our arrival, for no sooner did we strike the bluffs close upon their heels, than they ceased their efforts to keep the stock before them, but each fellow became deeply interested in saving himself, and by the time we had run five miles every ox was left behind, some shot full of arrows and others crippled in various ways.

I never saw such a chase before, nor will any of us witness such an exciting scene again. The Indians soon separated into small squads, and so did we. There were two hundred of us and less than half that number of Indians.

In spite of our efforts and determination to kill the last one of them, we could not gain a foot on them and after chasing them until afternoon we found our ponies exhausted and the Indians gaining ground. We were now in sight of Raw Hide Creek, a small stream where the Indians had always camped, and where several fights had occurred between them and the whites.

I was with a small squad who had become separated from the rest. With this squad were Brazie and Myers, two of our Lieutenants.

Brazie had taken command and had made his intentions known to follow them into the very doors of their lodges, and the boys all manifested a willingness to follow him.

We had lost sight of the other detachments and we checked up and gave our ponies a chance to breathe. There were thirty of us in this squad, all well armed with Spencer carbines, saber, and most of us had two Remington revolvers. There was one thing lacking—rations. In our haste we had neglected something to eat; but we concluded to push on and trust to luck, or rather our skill as hunters for meat.

It was dark when we halted our jaded ponies on the bluffs overlooking the meandering stream, and we deployed our small force upon several hills to see what discoveries could be made, and in a short time some of the boys reported that a small force of Indians had come to a halt in the mouth of a ravine and were massed for a fight. It was now too dark to distinguish one from another or attempt an attack. So it was decided to take up a position and await the dawn of day.

All night long we lay upon two bluffs and watched the foe intending to surround them at daylight and make a clean sweep of the whole gang. During the night Brazie's pony died from his over exertion of the day before, and our commander was thirty miles from Laramie and dismounted. This threw a damper on that gentleman's valor, for no pony could be procured to fill the vacancy without dismounting some other man, and this the Lieutenant would not do. However, we pledged ourselves to stand by him. Well, to cut the matter short, day danwed and we were in the act of making a bold dash when we discovered that the Indians massed at the mouth of that ravine was nothing more nor less than a small thicket of box-elder.

There was one happy soul in that squad when the discovery was made and that was our fat Lieutenant. We turned our faces toward Laramie, and late that night after a long march of over thirty miles, over a hilly prairie we came into our camp on the Platte almost starved and our ponies badly used up.

We learned from this that it was no easy job to catch an Indian when he had one or two miles the start. But we had saved the cattle, and that was something which under similar circumstances for a long time nad not been done. They always got away with the stock before the troops could get ready to follow. We had several experiences like this while we lay at Laramie. In fact the thing got to be monotonous and we got tired of it before we left the post. Several times while running the mail through to Horse Shoe Station and La Bonta, posts above Laramie, the boys were chased and compelled to fight their way through.

CHAPTER VIII.

Gen. Sulley's Powder River Expedition—Mrs. Fannie Kelley a Captive among the Indians—The Indian Scout "Swift Bear"—Fight at Horse Shoe Station—I am ordered there with Reinforcement—Running the Gauntlet—Arrival at La Bonta—Forty miles through an unknown country swarming with Sioux—Saved by a mistake—"Platte Bridge"—The place we Wintered—Scenes and Adventures here.

We remained at Fort Laramie until after Gen. Sulley's successful raid into the Indian country on Powder River. This was the most disastrous to the Sioux of any expedition ever sent out against them in that country. Gen. Sulley left the upper Missouri with a large force of cavalry and at the same time Gen. Wheaton marched from the North Platte with a similar force, and forming a junction on Powder River, they made a bold and determined dash into the very heart of the Sioux country, sweeping everything before them and capturing several hundred ponies and killing several warriors. Mrs. Fannie Kelley was at this time a captive among the Sioux, and negotiations had been for some time going on for her release but without success. Six months before this while en route for Oregon, with her husband and a train of emigrants, they were assailed at Box-elder creek, sixty miles beyond Laramie, and without making any resistance, believing that the Indians could be persuaded by kind treatment to let them pass, several of their party were killed, and Mrs. Kelley and her little girl were taken as captives; her husband made his escape. All efforts had thus far failed to effect her release, and this Powder River raid was instituted more for the purpose of chastising these Indians and releasing her than anything else. Although they were badly whipped with heavy loss of both life and property, they held on to their fair captive, and not until several months after this chastisement did Gen. Sulley succeed in releasing her.

By her skill and courage she succeeded in leading a band of warriors, who went with her to Fort Sulley, into the trap, or ambush and had them all captured. They had planned a capture of this fort at the same time they were to deliver her up and receive the reward offered by her husband and friends. But she made their intentions known by sending a note with a friendly Indian, to Sully, and thus saved herself, the fort, her husband's money, and captured the rascals who had so long held her in bondage.

Mrs. Kelley, for this act, was some time afterward voted an allowance by Congress, of $5,000. The Indians killed her little girl the next day after the capture of the train. During her captivity, a friendly Indian hanging around Fort Laramie, volunteered to carry verbal messages to the Indians, and made several trips, always bringing information as to their number, locality, intention, etc., and once or twice saved Laramie by giving timely notice of intended attack. Col. Manidier soon learned his value, and had him appointed a scout in the U. S. service, with the rank and pay of 1st Lieutenant. We saw him when he first adorned himself in his Lieutenant's uniform. The officers who ordered it from the States had it made as brilliant and gorgeous as possible.

He had been decked in a "breech clout" blanket and wore no hat. His new clothes consisted of dress coat, epaulets, pants with gold band and large plume and the usual undershirt and drawers, the latter of red flannel. The officers rigged him up in all these garments, and he strutted around through camp like a peacock. But it wasn't long before "Swift Bear" got tired of so much clothing, so one morning he presented himself before the Colonel adorned in his drawers and shirt and the large plume taken from his hat floated magnificently from his scalp lock. The band of his hat he had ripped off and tied around his neck and the long red sash which he had tied around his waist contained a revolver and long scalping knife.

He seemed to admire this style of dress more than the blue uniform, and friendly Indians at the post looked upon him with admiration and jealousy.

This Indian (Swift Bear,) as he called himself, became of great service to the soldiers along the route and had the confidence of all the officers. He performed much valuable service, and was ever watchful of the interests of all the posts along the North Platte.

Our officers had nearly all been placed in command of posts along the route, or assigned to various duties, and our companies were so thinned out by repeated details, that but small squads were left to each. Our company commander, H. W. Brazie, was appointed Judge Advocate, for the Department of the North Platte, and the writer awoke one morning to find himself in command of his company,—rather a great responsibility for a boy of seventeen summers.

To Brazie's official signature he would attach the letters "J. A." This the waggish boys construed into meaning "Jack Ass." After remaining here until along in October, 1865, a part of the Powder River expedition returned to Laramie bringing with them the spoils of a successful raid. Eight hundred ponies were driven in, beside a large number were packed with plunder captured in the Indian villages which had fallen in their way.

Soon after this one chilly afternoon, when we were all sitting around our little fires, report came to Laramie that a band of hostiles were in the vicinity of Horse Shoe Station, and that stock had been stampeded at that Post. We were expecting orders to march to that station, when an orderly came to camp with an order for thirty men with three day's rations to report at once to headquarters. An hour later I drew a detachment of my regiment up in front of the headquarters and with hat in hand reported to the Colonel.

"Are you detailed to command this detachment ?" he asked, eye-ing me from head to foot, in a manner that caused many very strange feelings to pass over me.

"I am," I answered as firmly as possible.

"Rather young, I think, for the expedition I have in view, but I guess you will go through, with half a chance."

My uneasiness was in no wise eased by the disappointed look I thought I detected in his face and the expedition he mentioned.

"I find it necessary to reinforce the garrison at Horse Shoe," he went on. "There is a force of Indians lurking around that post, and you may have to run the gauntlet before you reach there, but I want you to go through, and that too as quickly as your ponies can make it."

I thought for a moment that the floor was moving from under my feet, but I quickly regained my composure, and assuming an air of indifference which I did not feel, I answered:

"All right, Colonel, we'll go through," and with a parting injunction to proceed cautiously and telegraph my arrival, I left his presence and was soon at the head of my squad going at full speed up the Platte.

I must confess, that although I felt many misgivings, and that I should never have been sent out on such a hazzardous mission—especially with such a small force. I felt a pride which lifted me up, and I think I would not have for a moment wavered in my determination to go through even had I known that my scalp would have been "lifted" on the way. It was not bravery that led me on, but a reckless pride in doing something many men much older than myself would not undertake to do. As one of the boys remarked while on that double-quick march: "The durned fool hain't got sense enough to know any better."

Sending out men on either side to the top of the bluffs with instructions to keep even with us and at first sight of Indians to report at once, by sun-down we had left twenty miles of the twenty-five behind us, and as yet caught not one glimpse of redskins.

Darkness was fast gathering around us and we saw a little spark of light away on before, which we knew must be the light in the watch tower at the Horse Shoe Station. We were congratulating ourselves on our good luck when just behind us came a war-whoop, which for a moment seemed to raise every man out of his saddle. We were going at a good speed, and had our revolvers drawn. I at once ordered a halt, but no sooner had we checked up than the yell was repeated, this time in a manner which gave us to understand that we would have no business with that crowd, or as Flinn remarked: "Begorray it's no place fur a gintleman," and putting spurs to our tired ponies we pushed on for the station or blockhouse which we knew must be near.

The Indians, whose number we could not ascertain, followed yelling like wolves and occasionally firing a shot from their old muskets. We fired our revolvers in the direction indicated by their yells, and raised suck a racket that the 3rd U. S. Infantry boys at the blockhouse believed that we were having a dreadful struggle, and so telegraphed to Laramie. We soon reached the blockhouse, where we found the boys with their rifles thrust through every porthole waiting for a chance to shoot.

The gate, or entrance through the stockade around the stables was thrown open, we rushed in, and they were closed. The Indians knew too well the danger of approaching within range of those muskets, and soon left and took to the hills.

I immediately telegraphed to Fort Laramie:

"All right, we are here, but had to run the gauntlet. No one hurt."

There were about twenty-five soldiers at this blockhouse, which was situated twenty-five miles northwest of Laramie and forty miles beyond this was the next station—La Bonta. It must be remembered that no settlements of any kind were along this route, but these stations. All was a lonely, desolate waste of wild, uninhabited country. There is no timber except on the streams which flow into the North Platte, and they are few and far between. The country is hilly, and at the time of which I write, being so thinly settled, and guarded, that it was the paradise to the hostile red men, and the ravenous wolf, who always seem to prowl together.

After a warm supper, and a chat with the boys of the lonely blockhouse, we lay down upon the floor near the large wood fireplace, and in the few bunks not being occupied. There was a soldier here of the 3rd U. S. Infantry who had the typhoid fever, and the poor fellow had become delirious. In his wild ravings he imagined that everything and everybody around him were hostile Indians, and guns were all kept out of his reach as much as possible. In the excitement this had been neglected and we lay down to sleep leaving him with his nurse, whose duty it was to watch him and administer the medicine which had been sent up from Laramie.

We were all sound asleep save the lone guard in the watch tower. The nurse had become drowsy and had fallen fast asleep near his now sleeping patient. I cannot now tell just how it was, nor can any of the other boys, but we were all awakened at the same instant by a shot and repeated whoops, and the cry of "Indians, Indians, they are all around the camp fire, come out boys! turn out! fire!" and then another "bang-bang." The hot coals were scattered around the fire-place, and the bewildered men rushed to and fro in their underclothes hardly able to realize what happened or where they were. But the fact soon revealed itself, and we saw that the delirious man had seized one of our seven-shooters, and believing we were Indians he was determined to make a clean sweep of the whole garrison. In the excitement some one unbarred the door, and a rush was made for the outside. A dozen or more men in undress uniform ran out around the stockade before the fellow with the gun was secured. Had the Indians been near that moment the post could have easily been captured. We had all settled down around the fire talking of the strange occurrence when a red head peered out from beneath one of the bunks, and Flinn in a low, trembling voice, said:

"Sure an' it's a divil of a sthrange country where a man can't live inside nor out of the house at all, at all. Is the varmint secured?"

On being assured that the sick man was disarmed, Flinn crawled out from his hiding place and told how near one of the balls had shaved his head.

The poor deranged man had to be held in bed all night long, and it was piteous to hear him plead for his life, for he imagined he was in the hands of the Indians and would soon be roasted alive on the "big camp fire" which he saw burning in one end of the barracks.

We remained at this station until 5 o'clock the next evening when we received the following telegram: "Report to Col. Stagg at La Bonta between now and daybreak to-morrow. Telegraph your arrival."

"Great goodness! Did the man think I was made of iron, or was he drunk? Forty miles through an unknown country swarming with Indians, and in the night, too?" These were my reflections on receiving the order.

There was no help for it. We must go. I fully believed then that the commander at Laramie was drunk or he would not have ordered me to undertake such a hazardous march by night through such a country. Then I could not see why we were needed at La Bonta more than at Horse Shoe. We well knew that at the former place were a full company of Infantry and a large portion of the 2d California Cavalry.

But, as Flinn remarked "Orders is orders and must be obeyed, and we'll follow the thrail of the Sergeant." It was dark when we left the post—pitch dark, and I had deferred our start until after night, believing that if the Indians were still in the neighborhood of this post, we would not likely be observed and would slip away and leave them behind.

I cannot take time to fully describe that long and dangerous night's march, nor could I fully realize for a long time after, that it was indeed a reality and not a strange dream or a nightmare.

After bidding the boys at the blockhouse farewell and receiving many tokens of their good wishes and sympathy, we safely crossed the creek and came out through the timber on the opposite bank. Here we decided to divide our ranks and keep off the road and well out on the grass on either side to prevent if possible the sound of our horses' hoofs from attracting attention. With cocked revolvers in hand we dashed on all night long, never slacking our speed except when on top of some high bluff where we would halt for a moment to listen, and take what observation we could in the darkness.

Midnight came, and we knew that we must be in the neighborhood of La Bonta. We reached a point where two roads forked, and down before us we could see a long dark line of timber and we knew we were approaching a stream. After some deliberation, we took the right hand road and soon came down upon a wide bottom—a camping place for trains. We had taken the wrong trail. After some searching we finally found a ford and following a narrow trail, we came out on the broad road again. This proved to be the most lucky mistake we had ever made, for we learned next day that at the ford of that creek, two miles from where we crossed, there were concealed in the brush a hundred painted warriors evidently expecting us, and prepared for a general slaughter.

We had ridden all night in silence, not a word had been spoken above a whisper, and now we suddenly halted upon the skirt of timber of La Bonta creek. Just across the stream stands the low, dark, gloomy blockhouse surrounded by a stockade. No sign of life was visible, all darkness and silent. We crossed the creek and are just emerging from this wood when clear and distinct comes the command:

"Halt! Who comes there?"

It was like a voice from the dead. The first audible sound we had heard through all that night.

"We are a detachment of the 6th West Virginia Cavalry, from Laramie, ordered to report to Colonel Stagg, at La Bonta—is this La Bonta?" I replied.

"Yes. Stand fast for a moment, and send a man forward to the gate."

I complied with his command and we were soon taken inside the enclosure. I at once asked for Stagg, and his quarters were pointed out. Stagg was not in command here, but was on his way to Salt Lake, gathering up his scattered regiment as he went on.

The Post was in command of a Captain of the regular army—3d U. S. Infantry. He had held an office in the Rebel army, and we had heard of him as a high toned red taper, and, as a result, none of the soldiers along the route cared to be placed under his harsh rules.

I paused for a moment at the door and could see the glimmer of a light through its cracks and hear the low murmur of voices within. It was 3 o'clock in the morning and what on earth could be going on at that untimely hour?

"Come in," came in response to my knock. I pulled the latch string and entered, leaving the door ajar while my hand rested upon the latch within. Around a rude table sat three officers. They were deeply engaged in a game of poker which had been in progress all night. Money was piled up all around on the table, showing that a big game was being played. All looked up when I entered, and I became at once somewhat embarrassed, but only for a moment, for anger soon drove all thought of bashfulness from my mind.

"Who the devil are you, and what do you want here," said the gruff Captain, full of whiskey.

"I am Sergeant George H. Holliday, in command of a detachment of the 6th West Virginia Cavalry, from Laramie, ordered to report to Colonel Stagg. Is that officer here?" I answered, as coolly as possible.

"Were you ever disciplined, sir?" said the angry Captain, as he rose from his seat.

"Is Colonel Stagg here?" I asked, directing my enquiries to the two officers at the table.

"I say, young man, where did you get your manners; who drilled you, sir?" and the Captain caved around like a caged lion.

I knew at once what had made him mad, and I was in no humor for concilliation, and I very ambitiously replied:

"A graduate of West Point drilled me, sir—the present Judge Advocate of the department of the North Platte, a man who knows more discipline, tactics and military law in one minute than you ever will know."

The enraged Captain looked dumfounded—he could not speak, but looked at me and then at the other officers.

"When I entered your quarters, sir, I neglected to remove my hat, my only excuse is my embarrassment," said I; "and out of respect for these other officers, I will do so now."

"Shut the door," yelled the Captain as with clinched fists he started toward me.

I gave the door a slam, and heard the men who had gathered on the outside laugh.

I noticed the two Californians at the table wink at each other and give me what I thought to be an approving look.

"I shall report you to your Captain at the earliest opportunity, young man," said he as he sank exhausted into his chair.

"It won't do any good, sir; I happen to be filling the Captain's shoes myself. I am commanding my Captain's company, sir. They all know me, 'twon't be of any use sir."

At this the two officers broke out in a suppressed laugh, and the young Colonel arose and extended me his hand.

"I am Colonel Stag," said he. "Sergeant, we'll go out and have your horses and men cared for."

And as we passed through the stables where my men were impatiently waiting, he remarked, "The captain has lost heavily tonight, and has drunk too much."

The men at the post by this time were all up and they soon had us a breakfast cooked and our ponies cared for. The colonel left me with orders to be ready to move at 7 o'clock.

At daybreak I telegraphed to Colonel Manidier, at Fort Laramie, my safe arrival, and received the following reply;

"Well done. Proceed to Platte Bridge with Colonel Stag."

We moved the next morning with a detachment of the California Cavalry, and after three days' march, with the great mountains at our left and the North Platte winding thro' the rough barren bluffs on our right, we reached Platte Bridge, or Fort Casper, so named in honor of Lieutenant Casper Collins, who was killed by the Sioux, with twelve of his men, while trying to rescue an emigrant train attacked by the Indians. He was a son of Colonel Collins, of Ohio, and a member of the Eleventh Ohio Cavalry.

What shall I say of Fort Casper? If I were to attempt to tell of all the hardships and privations, and the hundreds of incidents of the cold winter which had now already begun, it would require more space than I could expect to be allotted me. Here our regiment soon began to collect, for we were to winter here.

There was at this time a small block-house here occupied by a detachment of the Second California Cavalry, whom I relieved, and some of the Third U. S. Infantry. A Frenchman by the name of Gunarde had built a long pine log bridge here at an enormous expense, but made a fortune off it the first year. The toll for crossing a six-yoke team was only $5, and it had to be paid, for the river could not be forded for miles either way.

The advance portion of our command had all collected here in the course of two weeks, under Major Squires, and we set to work at once building a block-house for our own use. We were late in the fall getting at it, and we found the heavy snows of winter upon us before we had gotten out of our tents into our log hut. Our logs for the building were cut by our men in the mountains seven miles from camp, and hauled by an ox train which we had pressed into service, our mule train having been turned over, with the exception of half a dozen wagons, at Laramie. There was little distinction made here between officers and privates. All realized alike the necessity of immediate action, and the officers volunteered to do their part, and more, of the hard, hard work, of chopping and hauling logs.

The teamsters of the ox train had nearly all been discharged and sent to Laramie and we had to fill their places. It was a common thing to see a captain or lieutenant with an ox whip at a "right shoulder shift," commanding six yoke of bulls toiling up the mountain side after a load of pine logs.

The pioneers were detailed, or rather took their turn, at chopping logs while half the force formed a chain guard around them for protection from the Indians who lurked around in the woods and watched for a chance to pick off our men while at work. We were compelled to work with our heavy revolvers on and our carbines leaning against the nearest tree. The boys had fine fun shooting black tailed deer which every now and then came dashing through the woods where they were at work.

About the last of November, when our job was about complete, and we began hauling wood for our winter's fuel, a heavy snow fell and the road to the mountains became so blocked with drifts that hauling for the time being had to be suspended.

During the night after the heavy snow a terrific wind came down upon us from the northwest and we knew that our men in the mountains would be snowed under. Their camp was located in a deep canyon under a huge cliff of rocks. They had for shelter nothing but pine brush thrown upon poles, for we had expected to get through before the storms of winter set in.

For several hours during the early part of that awful night those men sat under their meagre shelter and tried to keep the fires burning, while the snow drifted off the cliffs and filled the canyon to the depth of a dozen feet. The heavy snow weighted their shelter down and by midnight they found their fires extinguished and themselves buried beneath the fast falling snow. Wrapped in blankets, they fought the drifting snow with shovels, sticks and brush, piling it up all around them as high as they could reach. When day dawned and a relief party reached them, they were shoveling and beating a path through their prison walls, and it was several hours before they could be extricated. This was the beginning of the coldest winter ever seen in the Rocky Mountains, as many of the Indians and French told us before spring came.

We were caught without firewood, and our winter's supply of forage and rations had not yet arrived from Laramie.

Our quarters were done, and we had just moved in time to escape.

The situation was anything but cheering. We had three or four hundred ponies and mules to be fed, and the grass had been poor during the fall—so poor that but few trains had come through this route, but had preferred the South Platte. During the first few weeks after the snow came, there seemed to be a territorial convention of coyotes in vicinity of Platte Bridge. They could be seen at any time during the day in plain view of our quarters, and at night such howls we never heard before. But did the reader ever see a coyote? I will try and give a description of him.

The coyote is about the size of a yellow dog, and looks like a second hand wolf in straightened circumstances. He bears about the same relation to the genuine wolf that the buzzard does to the eagle, or that a chicken thief does to a modern bank cashier. He has a perpetual air of being ashamed of himself, or of something he has done.

As you catch a glimpse of him, trotting away from one bluff to another, looking back over his ears with his tail furled around his left leg, he looks as if he was aware that the police had a clew to his whereabouts, and were working up his case.

No one ever saw a fat coyote. You may catch a young one, civilize him as you can, feed him on canned groceries and put a brass collar on him, but his ribs will be his most prominent feature, and at the first opportunity he will voluntarily and ungratefully leave your hospitable roof, and from choice become a roving vagabond on the plains, living on carrion and sharing his meal with the buzzards.

These predatory shadows are not at all dangerous. There is no fight in them. That a popular fallacy regarding the ferocity of the coyote exists was illustrated not long since in the remark made by a Norwegian preacher in a sermon he preached not long after his arrival in the West. He said:

"Dear friends, methinks I see two men walking out on one of your beautiful prairies. They enjoy the perfume of the beautiful flowers, the songs of the innocent birds, the calm quiet beauty of your Indian summer evening. Communing together they walk heedless of danger. The sun sinks to rest beyond the distant horizon; the curtain of night gradually descends and closes out the light of day; still the men walk leisurely along feeling safe and secure. But hark! What sound was that in the distance? What blood-curdling howl makes them arrest their steps? It is, dear friends, the cry of the coyote on their track. The fierce and bloodthirsty coyote is in hot pursuit. And what, think you, do these unfortunate men do? One of them, my beloved congregation, realizes his danger, and running to a tree climbs, by the aid of a branch, out of reach of the fangs of the relentless beasts of prey. He called unto his companion and said unto him: 'Oh! my brother, climb up here and be saved!' but the other said: No, there is no danger; the wolves are still a great way off—I have plenty of time.' Alas! while he was yet speaking the dreadful coyotes came upon him, and rending him limb from limb, devouring him even in the twinkling of an eye. And thus it is, Oh! careless and heedless sinner, that you stand," etc., etc.

When the preacher concluded the sermon and was leaving the church, an old bull-whacker who had been on the plains for many years, accosted him and said:

"Parson, the front end of your sermon was grand and glorious, and calculated to bluff the unconverted sinner. You had a full hand, and might have raked in all the mourners in the pot, but Lord bless your soul you played a nine-spot when you chipped in with that coyote yarn."

CHAPTER IX.

After the Sioux—Our Winter Costume—Pawnee Scouts—Our Officers Take a Hand at "Draw Poker"—a Lieutenant raises a "Cold Deck" and rakes in the entire outfit of his Noble Red Brother—Again on the War Path—We strike a fresh trail and run it—Into a Snowdrift—Indians burn a Saw Mill at Laramie Peak and kill all hands—Three Scouts discover a Dead Warrior and conclude to take an Invoice of his personal effects—We make some scientifical discoveries and also some personal appropriations—Buffalo, Blacktailed Deer, Elk and Grizzly Bear—Running the Mail. Hauling Wood. Intense suffering. Those Vinegar Pies. Tobacco all gone and the boys smoke up their rations of Tea and Coffee. We venture far into the Mountains after deer. We discover "Jack's Valley" and go into camp in the mouth of a Cave. Howell kills a Buck. Discovery that we are camped in a Grizzley's Den, &c.

After the weather had become somewhat warmer, and the snow had packed and settled, a volunteer force was called to go down the North Platte below Deer Creek Station to look after some Indians who had been stealing the stock from that post.

About fifty of us offered at once to go, glad to get away from this lonely place and anxious for some diversion, even if we had to fight a horde of redskins to find it.

We had been providing ourselves with the customary winter outfit of clothing, which consisted of a wolf skin, or buffalo cap, buffalo skin overshoes with leggins attached which reached to the knees and then fastened by long buckskin strings was allowed to hang down the side of the legs. Buffalo mittens, and the customary cavalry uniform, completed the costume. These "extras" had to be furnished by ourselves, and cost considerable.

Wrapped in the above described outfit, we sat out one cold clear morning, over an unbroken road through snowdrifts, and after a hard days march we reached Deer Creek Station. This post was held by some of the 11th Ohio Cavalry boys, under a Lieutenant, and a small squad of U. S. Infantry. And here we found twenty-five Pawnee Indian soldiers who had come over from the Missouri River under a white officer, after the mail. The route along the Missouri from Yankton had become blocked with snow, and was impassable and no mails had gone through for sometime, so the mail was sent over the North Platte route.

After our supper was devoured, as usual, everybody settled down to a game of poker, in which all the Indians took a hand.

All Indians play poker. How they learn and where they get their cards has been a mystery. You may tame a wild Indian, educate him, convert him to Christianity, make a missionary of him, and send him back to his brethren, and before the sun goes down he will stake his last broncho on a game of poker.

There are but few tricks known to the professional gambler which the redskin is not perfectly familiar with, and which he will not resort to when opportunity affords. But a trick was played by one of our officers here which laid everything in the shade these Indians had ever seen.

Four men sat down to a rough table for a game. A Lieutenant, a private, and two Pawnee Indians. A previous arrangement had been made to "raise a cold deck" on these fellows, which was successfully done and raised more excitement at that little remote blockhouse than an attack by Indians would have caused.

The game was a fifty cent "ante" game, with no limit to the bets. Everything was going on nicely and the two Indians had been allowed to win largely, quite a crowd of boys had gathered around and were watching with intense interest. Finally the time came for action. It was the Lieutenant's deal, the cards were dealt out, and a close observer could detect a twinkle of satisfaction in the eyes of each of the Indians as they picked up their hands. Of course all came in.

The buck on the left had four Jacks, Ingun no. 2 had four Queens, the private four Kings, and the Lieutenant four aces. All discarded one and drew one, except the Leiutenant. Then the betting commenced. First a ten, then doubled, and soon ran up to one hundred dollars and over sized one Indian's pile, but he was not to be bluffed. He had a winning hand and he meant to stake all he possessed on it. Two of the men had lain down their hands, and the fight was between the Lieutenant and the Indian of the four Jacks. He lacked fifty dollars to see the last raise. He pondered long, looked puzzled, then said:

"Jo Jim got no more money. Put up good pony—fifty dollars?"

The kind officer agreed to the pony, and the two hands were shown. The Lieutenant had won over a hundred dollars and a pony, and the poor red man was busted.

This wound up the game, and as the unfortunate man arose he said:

"Jo Jim, all broke—no money—no pony—all gone."

But before we left the next morning the money was all returned and the pony restored to the rightful owner, and I suppose there was never a happier Indian than Jo Jim, especially when the Lieutenant learned him the trick it was done with.

Several miles below Deer Creek we were surprised at finding a fresh trail in the snow leading from the North Platte in the direction of Laramie Peak. We decided at once to follow this trail. A close examination revealed the fact that the Indians had passed through the night previous and could not be many miles in the advance.

Following as rapidly as the nature of the country and the frequent snow drifts would permit, we journeyed on until afternoon when a severe snow storm sat in and we were compelled to give up the chase, and make our way across the plain for La Bonta. We reached it late that night, almost exhausted and several men badly frozen. That night the Indians attacked a small force of cavalry and some Frenchmen at a saw mill near Laramie Peak, killing every man there, and burning the mill to the ground.

We returned the next day to Deer Creek. But I must relate an adventure which three of us had on the way, and in doing so I don't want to place my comrades and myself in the light of grave robbers, for in that country, and at that time, no such a thing was known, or at least it was not known by that name. It was a common thing for surgeons to take up the bodies of soldiers and teamsters who died and were burried in shallow graves along the road, and dissect them as there was no law to interfere. But our case was somewhat different, inasmuch as we were not doctors in search of scientific knowledge, but scouts, in search of Indians dead or alive, and as we could find no live ones, but did find a dead one, we thought it our duty to know just who and what he was. We had been sent in advance and ordered to take observations from all the higher bluffs, and if we thought advisable, to go over on the Platte where the trail led from. There were three of us "Pony" Doland, Corporal Hewell and myself.

We were several miles in advance of our command when we struck the fresh trail, and following this we soon reached a large piece of timber on the bank of the river. Here we approached cautiously. After viewing the surrounding country from a high bluff, we entered the woods and at once were surprised to see that the trail came to an end, and that the woods were full of tracks. The snow of the night before had somewhat covered up the tracks and we knew that no Indians had been there that day. We had scattered through the timber, when we heard Doland calling to us:

"Come quick, I've found an Ingun."

Instantly we were at his side under a scrub oak, and sure enough just above us was a great bundle of elk tepes painted all over the outside with pictures of Indian camps, buffalo hunting, painted warriors, etc., all nicely rolled up and securely tied to poles laid from limb to limb.

"Boys that's a buck, and he's not been dead long, for everything is fresh—must have been hung there day before yesterday," remarked Hewell after a short look at the "sleeper."

"O no, not long, haint been hung more than three days at most. What's going to be done, boys?" said Doland looking first at the tree and then at us.

"Go away and let him be, I suppose," I ventured to say, although I knew at once that our curiosity would never allow us to leave without seeing the contents of that tepe.

"Boys, it won't do to fool around here too long," said Doland. "I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll climb up and cut him down if you will unroll him."

We agreed to his proposition and, in a twinkling he was up the tree and cutting the thongs which bound the noble red man to his last resting place.

This done, he gave him a push with his foot and the great bulk came down and striking one of the limbs, lodged for an instant, then tilted over and striking the ground with a dull thud stood on his head for an instant, then toppled over and lay at full length before us.

It was a strange sight and one which caused an involuntary shudder to creep over me.

"Light into him Sarge," said one of the boys.

"Light in yourself, my knife is too dull." And I began to regret I had anything to do with the matter.

But we were in for it, and we all commenced cutting the thongs and soon had a large elkskin tepe peeled off and were down to a bran new buffalo robe, this too soon came off and some old blankets began to appear. The pile had by this time become greatly reduced and began to assume the shape of an Indian.

An offensive smell began to issue from the blankets, and we handled the old rags with a good deal of care.

Finally, by turning it over a few times we had the blankets off, and there was your Indian. He was a large and well formed young man and the paint upon his face had evidently been smeared on after death. For the good of science we tried to discover the cause of his death, but could discover no wound nor evidences of disease, and our verdict was that he had probably died of a broken heart.

He was dressed in a nicely beaded buckskin shirt and leggings, with a very ornamented pair of moccassins which Doland envied so much that it required much pursuasion to prevent him from appropriating them for his own use. Wrapped in a blanket by his side, were all his earthly effects. This we explored, and found therein a short barrelled gun, a bow and quiver full of arrows, a hunting pouch which contained a vast store of small trinkets.

A tomahawk pipe was among these, and as I wanted one of these instruments of death I seized it at once and thrust it into my belt. Several pieces of old silver partially converted into ear rings were among the trophies which, as the boys said would not pass current in the happy hunting grounds, we pocketed them.

We had now thoroughly dissected our subject and concluded to do him up and swing him again where we found him. But after wrapping all the goods around him we found the bundle twice as as large as it was before and our thongs would not reach, besides the weather had changed and a cold, freezing wind was blowing down upon us from the northeast and we concluded to postpone the funeral until hotter weather. So after swearing eternal secrecy over the corpse of our departed friend and brother, we mounted our ponies and retraced our trail to the main road where we overtook the command, but said nothing of what we had done. The old hatchet, I burried it a mile from the scene, in a sand bank, where I suppose it still lies in its little grave. This dastardly deed leaked out several months afterward. When the Sioux under Standing Elk, surrendered at Laramie, they wanted the unnatural wretches punished, but they never found out just who did it, and we never told it until we were mustered out at Leavenworth in the summer following.

We returned to Platte Bridge the next day, through a dense storm. This was the last expedition we undertook during the winter. Our time was spent in looking after our comfort and keeping ourselves in wood and something to eat. No rations had yet arrived and we saw that before the winter would break we would have to depend upon our own resources for food. The mountains, a few miles distant were full of black and white tailed deer, elk, persimmon bear and buffalo were roaming in the Wind River Valley in large herds, but this was one hundred and twenty-five miles distant. If the weather would permit, we could come out all right, but if it was extremely cold our chances were slim.

For six weeks we lay in our quarters inactive. Each night brought with it the usual game of "freeze out" and every other day a detail had to be made go with the extra train to the mountain for wood. No matter how cold, the wood must come, and many of the boys bear marks to this day of the sufferings endured in those mountains with that wood train.

Then there were the U. S. mails to be run through twice a week from Platte Bridge to Deer Creek east, and from Platte Bridge to Sweet Water Station west. The mail had to go as long as the weather and condition of the road would permit, and many times the boys were twenty-five successive hours on the road, wading through deep snow, breaking a pass for their pack mules and ponies, over a distance of twenty-five miles which was usually made when the weather was good, in four hours.

Thus matters went on at this post until some time in November when the road between Platte Bridge and Fort Laramie, became blocked up with snow and mails had to stop, as did all traveling over that part of North Platte route. But there was one duty we had to perform—wood we must have or freeze to death, and not a stick could be gotten short of the mountains, seven miles distant.

With our available wagons, enough could be hauled for but three days use. The result was that officers and men alike had to turn out and "work out their road tax," as the boys termed the work of making a road through snow drifts. We had no fears of hostile Indians; we knew the red man could not live out in such Arctic weather with his scanty supply of clothing.

Our rations were now cut short, and such a thing as vegetables were out of the question. The only thing we could get which approached vegetable food was vinegar, out of which the boys made pies. If our wives could see those pies, now, wouldn't they be ashamed of their pastry? They were flavored with nutmeg, which we purchased from the now scanty stock of the French trader at the post at twenty-five cent cents each. The crust resembled a piece of newly tanned leather and would rival it in elasticity and durability. The custard after the pie was backed, looked like warm glue, and was just about as sticky. But we ate the pies all the same and in our innocence thought they couldn't be beat by the best French cook in America.

About this time another calamity came upon us. The supply of tobacco gave out. Had the flour run out, or the pork suddenly disappeared, and all these been entirely cut off, the loss would not have been felt so much as was the loss of tobacco. Nearly every man in camp smoked his pipe, and a large number, of course, chewed. As a result, the old smokers took to smoking coffee and tea and wild sage. But tea came the nearest filling the vacancy and it was not long before our rations of tea was all smoked up. However there were a few chewers in camp who had taken the precaution to supply themselves with the weed at Laramie, but they kept it mighty still, and although they were constantly watched by the smokers, we could not find where they kept it hid.

It was a common thing for the smokers to keep a constant watch on the chewer's mouth, and watch him spit, or detect if possible any movement of his jaw, and if at any time a "quid" was discovered in his mouth to negotiate at once for the second-hand chew.

It was generally pretty well chewed up before the smoker got possession of it, but after it was dried before the fire, smoked very well, and tasted sweeter than honey to the famished smoker.

Up to this time none of our men had ventured into the mountains very far. In fact they had not time to go, and it was not necessary to go over the first range of mountains to find deer in abundance. The boys had been keeping the camp pretty well supplied with fresh venison and antelope, killed within sight of our camp.

Sergeant Howell and myself talked the matter over one cold morning as we stood leaning against the sunny side of the blockhouse and looked into the blue sky beyond the snow covered mountains, and concluded to organize a small squad and if possible penetrate into the mountains, far beyond the first range. We had a longing desire to see what kind of a country lay hidden in the dark shadows of those mountain's whose peaks we could see looming up away back in the southwest.

Accordingly on the next day, with three ponies well packed with robes, blankets, ammunition, cooking materials, tents, ax and shovels, and a week's rations of flour, salt and coffee, three of us sat out midst the hoots and jeers of the boys who made fun of the proposition to go on such a hunt. Cooper, Howell and myself, composed the party. After plowing through snow for six or eight hours, we found ourselves at the Red Buttes, five miles from camp.

We had been told by the half-breeds at the post that there was a pass or a low gap at this point, over which we could take our ponies, and several miles beyond was a beautiful valley, where they could get sufficient grass under the snow to live on.

Although night was approaching, we determined to try and make our way over the pass, and camp in some canyon in the mountains over night. We found the pass comparatitively free from snow, as it had blown off the rock into the canyons, and after a few hours hard work we found ourselves well into the mountains.

We had forced our ponies over the rocks and through narrow paths, along the edges of dizzy crags, where a slip of the foot would have precipitated man or beast down into the unknown depths of yawning chasms and we were approaching the western slope of the pass, when one of our ponies plunged into a deep snow drift, and it was long after dark before we succeeded by aid of our shovels in extricating him. The wind had settled and we concluded to camp here until daybreak. These mountains were covered with great, stately pines, with but little under brush, and we soon had a warm fire of pine knots, over which we made coffee, slap-jacks and delicious gravy from the grease of a piece of fat "sow belly." Then to add to these luxuries, "Doc." Cooper had brought with him a large plug of tobacco which he had succeeded in saving for a long time, and soothed our brains with an old pipe—a "vet" of the late rebellion. There was no sleep that night, for a pack of hungry gray wolves set up a howl in which all other wild beasts of the mountains joined, or at least it so appeared to us.

With the approach of day they fled, and we took up our line of march through the mountains. About noon of the second day we came in sight of the valley, and oh! such a spot. From our lofty view it resembled a large lake nestled away down at the foot of the grand mountains which entirely surrounded it. It was nearly round, and the distance across either way was not less than a mile. There was not a stick of timber to be seen on it, and its surface was as level as a floor. What a spot of beauty this must have been in spring and summer time. Tall dead grass stood high above the snow—taller than our ponies' backs, which must have been beautiful when clothed in green.

We decided at once to descend into the valley, and in the course of an hour we found the mouth of a canyon just at the edge of this beautiful plain where we concluded to go into camp. Great loose boulders lay thick in the deep gulch around which we wound our way for a few yards, when we came to the mouth of a cave. Here we found evidences of an old camp, and we congratulated ourselves upon our good fortune. Howell confessed at once that he did not like the looks of the "hole in the hill," and we thought we could trace out huge tracks partially covered by recent snows, but we banished all thoughts of grizzly bears from our mind and settled down to business at once.

Our ponies were soon rooting down into the snow and would fetch up tufts of rich green grass which they ate with a relish.

After getting settled, the snow cleared away, the tents stretched over some poles laid across the rock, and everything as comfortable as possible, Howell took his carbine and wandered off along the edge of the timber, and he had scarcely disappeared from view when we heard the crack of his gun and saw a herd of black tailed deer bounding away across the plain leaping high over the tall grass. With guns in hand we ran to Howell and found him "locked horns" with a large wounded buck. He had thrown down his gun, supposing his game to be dead, and with knife in hand he rushed up to stick him, but the buck rallied and Howell found him to be the liveliest corpse he ever saw. Howell had been forced into the brush and among the rocks and the buck could not force his broad horns where his enemy could crawl. His hind legs were broken, and Howell had given him several thrusts with his long knife, but still he fought, and the moment we appeared he left Howell and made a bold dash at us. He could only drag his hinder parts and we could easily get out of his way, and so we gave him a ball which ended the matter.

He was the largest deer we had yet seen, and a few moments after he became stiff we stood him up beside one of our ponies—the smallest one—and he lacked but little of being as high as the pony. This was encouraging, and we lit our pipes and manifested our satisfaction by smoking until late in the night.

Our ponies had been allowed to roam about the place at will through the day, and we tied them in the mouth of the cave that night.

Before dark we discovered the following words cut in rude letters, deep in the bark of a tree:

"Jack's Valley. Discovered by Trapper Jack, in 1850."

We concluded that for our better protection we would take turns at standing guard. We had all stood our time, and Cooper was on watch, when about 3 o'clock in the morning he gave us a shake and in a hoarse, hurried whisper said:

"Boys! Boys! Get your guns quick. There's something in this cave."

In an instant we were on our feet with cocked carbines.

"What did it sound like?" we asked, excitedly.

"Sound like! Great goodness; didn't you hear it? Why a dead man could have heard that. I tell you there's Indians, bears, lions, or a gang of wolves in that hole."

For a long time we sat watching, waiting in silence for some monster to thunder from the mouth of that cavern, and once, while everything was quiet as the grave save the rustle of the leaves in the tree-tops, we thought we could detect a low growling sound away back in the bowels of the mountain, and we all involuntarily whispered in concert:

"There! listen! hear that?"

This broke the silence which had become painful, and we drew together around the fire, which we replenished by throwing on some pine knots. Our ponies too, seemed to be alarmed, for they pricked up their ears and moved in a way that gave us to understand that there was more than imagination in the alarm. Until day-break we sat with our guns in hand, and only laid them aside when we could see plainly into the opening of the cave.

After a hearty breakfast of venison, we left Cooper to watch the camp with the understanding that should we be wanted at camp he would fire two shots in rapid succession. Taking different directions we ascended the mountain, and I had gone but half a mile from camp when I saw a deer lying down in some bushes. Dropping flat in the snow I lay quietly for a moment, then I raised my gun and peering along its barrel I saw the deer had arisen and was standing broadside toward me. Aiming low I fired, and with a bound the deer sprang forward and fell dead. I soon had her entrails out, and tying her legs together I shouldered her up and started to retrace my steps.

I had gone but a few steps when bang! bang! came the report of two shots in rapid succession. They were not just in the direction of the camp, and I stopped short and listened for a moment. Then bending under my load I hastened forward, and soon again came the report of two more shots, this time farther up the mountain, and I was at a loss to understand their meaning. Turning in the direction of the sound, I made all haste possible, and was surprised at coming all at once upon my two comrades well up the mountain side, with three ponies all packed with our entire camp fixtures, and anxiously waiting for me to turn up.

"Why, what's up, boys?" I asked in surprise.

"Grizzlys! we've been camping with grizzlys. I wouldn't stay there another hour for all the deer in the mountains. Why, you had not been gone ten minutes before there began the darndest roar and growling I ever heard, and I went right to work packing the ponies and clearing out the camp, and I tell you I think I did mighty well to get out of that hollow as well as I did."

I felt vexed and tried to remonstrate with Cooper, and intimated that he was a coward, but when he went on and told how he saw "his eyes shine back in the cave," and how frantic the ponies became, I soon sided with them, and we concluded to return at once to the fort and let deer hunting alone.

We had two deer, one very large and the other a small one, and after tying my doe on one of the ponies, we started for camp, where we arrived late that night and entertained the boys with a narrative of our experience and a description of the country until long after midnight, and many were the resolutions formed to go there as soon as the weather would permit and "clean out that den of bears," but I will add just here that they never went, for when they heard sometime after that a grizzly had been killed near Laramie Peak that weighed 1,400 pounds, and that one of the Eleventh Ohio Cavalry boys lost his life in the fight, and another had his bowels ripped out, they got out of the notion of going, and concluded they didn't want any bear meat anyhow.

This proved to be a valuable trip after all, for not long after this we got out of forage, and had it not been for the discovery of "Jack's Valley" our ponies would all have died before spring. But in January they were all driven over the mountain, and the April following we found them still there, much improved in flesh and appearance.

How many times since have I thought of that beautiful valley and wished that I might again climb over those mountain crags, and spend a month there secluded from the care of the busy world.

CHAPTER X.

A Buffalo Hunt in the Wind River Valley. We are joined at Three Crossings by the 11th Ohio boys. How we made the trip. Extreme suffering. After a day and night out we sight Sweet Water Station where the 3rd U. S. Infantry and a Company of 11th Ohio take us in "out of the cold." In sight of the Black Hills, Laramie, Plains, and Wind River Valley. A grand scene. The chase. We kill four Bulls, and are chased by Snake Indians. Camp on the field. The mules eat up the wagon tongue and leave our old ship without a helm. Return to Platte Bridge and find the Scurvey in camp. Some of our Comrades already dead. The coldest day on the Indians record. Several men badly frozen. We are snowed in for six weeks. No communication with the outside world for that period. Freezing to death, and how it feels. Communication restored. Great excitement in camp. Wolves dig up our dead comrades. Ordered to Fort Laramie. "Standing Elk" surrenders with all his followers. His speech in full. We camp in their midst to hold them level, etc.

About the first of December our officers received a telegram from the officer in command at Three Crossing, one hundred and twenty miles farther west, stating that buffalo were plentiful there and asking them to come up and join them in a grand hunt. The temptation was too much to withstand, and, notwithstanding the extreme cold and bad condition of the trail, a party was organized, and, the writer, although not a commissioned officer, received a polite invitation to accompany them. Of course he assented for he was determined to see all there was in it, and not allow one in that camp to go farther than he did. Could we have known of half the suffering and trouble of the long journey before us, we would not have thought once of undertaking such a wild goose chase.

But we did not know, and one cold morning found a dozen officers and men mounted on the best ponies in the camp and with a four mule wagon and all the necessaries for a hunt, we left Fort Casper amidst the protests of our comrades who maintained that we would find the roads impassable, and that we would all freeze to death on the way.

Our party consisted of Capt. M. Donahoe, Lieutenant Krouse, Lieut. Miller, Lieut. H. W. Brazie, "Scout" Purdy, "Buss" Lindsey, our innocent friend Flinn, and the writer, besides others whose names I have forgotten.

We found the trail barely passable and only rendered so in many places by the use of our shovels.

The next station beyond Casper, as I stated, is fifty miles distant. The road was not a bad one in the summer time. It ran parallel with the chain of mountains known there as Snowy Range. There is not a stick of wood on the way except along the foot-hills of the mountains several miles distant from the road.

We toiled along all day, walking and riding, any way to keep from freezing and make the best time, and when night came we had made half the distance to Sweet Water. We had some pine wood in our wagon, and with this we built a fire in a gulch and went into camp for the night. Our suppers over, we lay down and tried to sleep, but found that the pile of robes and blankets we had with us were insufficient, and our little stock of wood soon gave out and the fire was reduced to a mere handful of embers around which we huddled covered with blankets. There was but little wind, but the night was surely the coldest we had ever seen.

At 10 o'clock the last spark of fire was gone, we were all crouched together in one shivering mass and our ponies and mules, although heavily blanketed, shook like aspen leaves. The situation was a desperate one, and something must be done.

It was decided at once that we must move, and that quickly. In ten minutes we were struggling on again leading our ponies through snow which screeched, and groaned under the wheels of our wagon, which added a gloom to the situation. I think there was not a man in that squad but regretted that he had undertaken the trip. But we pushed on and at day light we sighted the little blockhouse standing alone on a barren bluff just before us.

It was like a sail to shipwrecked sailors, and we raised a glad shout which aroused the men at the Post who came out and expressed joy and surprise in various ways. They had seen no new faces for several weeks.

We remained here all day and night and were joined next day by two men from this Post.

The remainder of our march was made with comparative ease, as we found plenty of fire wood for fires, and we camped often.

The Devil seems to have had dominion over this country at one time. At least so the names of different curiosities along the route indicate.

There is the "Devil's Backbone," a long ridge of ragged rocks, resembling the fins of a large fish. Then the "Devil's Gap" a deep cut through the mountains of rocks. The "Devil's Pulpit," which is a pile of rocks standing alone on top of a bluff, resembling exactly an old fashioned pulpit.

We reached Three Crossing Station after several days march, and a vast deal of suffering from cold and fatigue. Here we found a company of the 11th Ohio Cavalry, comfortably fixed in their substantial blockhouse. They were living on jerked buffalo meat, and all seemed to be in good health. We saw evidences everywhere of plenty of this kind of game, and our anxiety for the onslaught became unbounded.

The next day, after our arrival, the hunt was organised and we started for the field of action. "Johny Rubb," a Cincinnati boy of the 11th Ohio Cavalry, a successful boy in the chase, was elected Captain of the expedition. Our wagon accompanied us to bring in the meat.

We had been told by our young Captain that when we struck the herd two men must select a bison and stick to him 'til we had got him down, that when wounded he would leave the herd and then we must ride onto him and use our revolver as effectually as possible. But there was one thing he forgot to tell us and that was that the bull would dodge from right to left and occasionally stop short and so would the pony and that we would likely go on—heels over head for some distance. But if Johnny forgot to tell us, we learned it from sad experience that day. The day was not so intensely cold as the few days preceeding, and we had gone but six or eight miles when we came to a bluff overlooking the Laramie Plains and the Wind River Valley. The scene was grand, but we only had a second to enjoy it, and had just sighted a herd of perhaps 8,000 buffalo moving like a cloud from the direction of Wind River, hotly pursued by a party of Snake Indians who lived along this valley, when just below us, not more than two hundred yards, we suddenly discovered a small herd of young bulls lying down.

"Go," said Rubb, in a low and distinct tone, and we went. So did the bulls. Pell mell, over bluffs, down into canyons and across the wide bottoms, through tall sage brush. Now we were onto them—bang! bang!—on we plunged wildly and madly, not heeding the holes made by the prairie dogs, or the deep chasms, over which our nimble ponies leaped, but on, right up side-by-side with the great clumsy creature who gets over ground faster than one would suppose—then we plunge into a great snow drift, and the mad, frightened herd struggle out and scatter in different directions. Look back over the route over which we came. Just behind us lies a huge dark monster struggling in the agonies of death, beside him, with a knife in one hand and a bridle rein in the other, stands a soldier with his panting pony, who seems to know that he has done his work well and that his object is accomplished. Then away yonder are two men closely pursuing a wounded bull. We see the smoke of their revolvers at every discharge, but cannot hear the report. Now he stops—only for an instant, then plunges wildly forward and falls dead. The two men dismount and with a long butcher knife finish their work. Two of this herd had been cut off and were pursued in the direction of Wind River.

The chase of the herd lasted only a few minutes, in that time we succeeded in cutting out four young bulls, all of which we killed.

This ended the chase proper, for that day, for we would have had many miles to travel in order to find the remainder of that herd.

I had joined two of the 11th boys early in the pursuit in a wild run in pursuit of a large bull whom we had wounded at the first fire. He took off in the direction of Wind River and we pursued him close for four miles through deep snow and wild sage, never out of range and most of the time within a few feet of him, and yet he succeeded in getting that distance before we brought him down.

Finally he became exhausted from loss of blood, and came to a dead halt on top of a bluff in plain sight of an Indian camp on the river a few miles distant. He then was of course thoroughly aroused and angry, and we did not dare to approach him, but stood off and peppered him with our Remmingtons until he dropped on his knees, opened his mouth and vomited several gallons of blood, then fell heavily forward, and we knew the jig was up.

The Snake Indians who lived on Wind River, were on terms of peace with the whites, but they were considered as dangerous, and a good many men had disappeared while hunting here, who could never be accounted for, and there was no doubt but that these treacherous Indians had killed them. We had been warned not to approach their camp, or hunt buffalo within sight of their villages, as they always became enraged when this was done, and it was a violation of the treaty that was made some years ago.

We were now scattered over a radious of twenty miles, and our game of course could not all be gathered up by our wagon on that day.

We concluded to donate our prise to the Indians, and our resolution received a new strength as we saw a band of them leave their tepes and start toward us as fast as their old ponies could move.

We didn't stop to make a presentation speech, or stand for a moment on ceremony, but mounted our bronchos and struck out in the direction of camp on a double quick.

On the way we met our team with Filan as escort. So I struck out with the wagon in the direction taken by the herd in their flight, while the two comrades of the 11th Ohio Cavalry struck for camp. We soon came in sight of a small squad of our men who were skining a buffalo, and in a short time after we had the hind quarters, hump and tongue, and a few other choice pieces, loaded into our wagon and were on our way over the plains to where another victim lay with his hide peeled off.

There was only one man with this one, the others having gone in pursuit of a straggling bison which had run past them while they were at work.

There were now four of us. The other men of our party had all gone to the camp and we were left with the team to get to camp as best we could.

Night was fast approaching, and we judged that we must be eight miles from the station. We saw now that it would be our fate to camp where we were, over night, as it would not be possible to find the way back through snow drifts over a strange country.

We were well provided with "jerk" buffalo meat, which we had been eating all day, our poor old ponies and mules had not a bite nor had we anything to give them now.

We were near a thicket of wild sage, the stalks of which grew as large as a man's arm.

Out of these we made a fire and boiled our coffee, The four mules were hitched to the wagon tongue near the doubletrees. On top of a pile of sage brush under the wagon, in our robes and blankets we crawled and were soon comfortably sound asleep, nor did we awake until the sun had peeped over the bluffs in the east.

Flinn was the first man up. Then we were awakened by his yells.

"Boys, boys, the mother of saints, the mules have swallowed the wagon tongue and deserted the camp intirely."

We all crawled out at once, and sure enough the mules were gone and no where in sight.

"I'll wager me government pony that the pesky Schnakes over beyant, have the mules at this minute in their bloody camp," said Flinn, now terribly excited.

"But see here, what would the Indians want with the wagon tongue?" said one of the boys thinking that he had exploded Flinn's theory.

"Why shure and isn't the tongue hickory? an' don't the pesky skunks make war clubs an' bows an' arrows of hickory? It's a bloody wonder they did not lug off the whole of the wagon, sure," replied the Irishman, as he started to a bluff to see what observations he could make.

But we had seen mules eat up wagons in the army in the east, and a close examination revealed the fact that they had gnawed the tongue off during the night and had wagged off with it.

Flinn soon called to us that he could see our team a short distance off. We soon had them back at our camp. But how to fix the wagon tongue was the rub.

We went at it, however, and by heating the king-bolt in a sage wood fire fanned into a white heat with our hats and caps we succeeded in making a hole through the broken parts into which we drove a pin made from one end of an ax handle, then wrapped with a buffalo rope, and we soon moved all right in the direction of camp, which we reached that forenoon, where we found the officers and men anxiously awaiting our arrival. The next day we had a successful hunt, in which we all joined. In this hunt Lieut. Myers was thrown from his pony over an embankment fully thirty feet, and would have been killed had he not fallen into a snow drift. He was in hot pursuit of a bull which ran out along a ridge to the embankment where he (the bull) suddenly dodged to one side and the Lieutenant's pony stopping short, plunged his rider head first and plant-ed him wrong side up in the snow drift. All the officers succeeded in killing several fine bulls each, during the week we hunted at this place, and we went back to Platte Bridge feeling well satisfied with our experience.

It is a hard matter to kill a cow or a calf, as the bulls protect them by keeping them well in front when being pursued. Nobody ever saw a buffalo cow on picket, and its generally the pickets who get killed. The robe of a cow is much more valuable than that of a bull, but cow robes are rarely ever seen in our livery stables, or even in the markets. But I can't devote any more time to buffalo hunting. Suffice to say that we spent a week here and killed many more buffalo than we wanted, and only loaded our wagon with hind quarters and hump. We returned to Platte Bridge after being gone nearly three weeks. The trip was a hard one, but we had an abundance of fun and an experience which none of us would care to part with.

On our return to Casper we found the scurvy had broken out among the boys to an alarming extent, and some of them had already died. The lack of vegetables was the cause, and our surgeon feared that the dreaded disease would spread and that death might claim all the camp for its victims before spring, if we could not obtain a fruit diet of some kind.

The weather had now become fearful, and our supply of forage was about exhausted.

Major Squires now determined to send our herd of ponies over in "Jack's Valley," only retaining enough to do necessary work at the post.

It was now the latter part of December and we were in a bad condition. A good many men sick with scurvy, rations short, wood scarce, mules and ponies freezing to death every night, and the weather so intensely cold that it was next to impossible to get to the mountains and back alive.

We awoke one morning and found some of our horses piled up in our door, all stiff. The night had been the coldest of the winter, and the poor freezing brutes had sought the eastern side of the buildings for protection from the cold winds of the northwest.

"God pity the poor men who have to go to the mountains this morning," said our kind-hearted Captain Donahoe as he opened his door and saw the drifting snow and felt the frost sting his smooth shaved face.

"I would rather see the wagons burned for fuel than to see men risk their lives out in such weather as this," he continued. But the wood-pile was low and of course we must have fires.

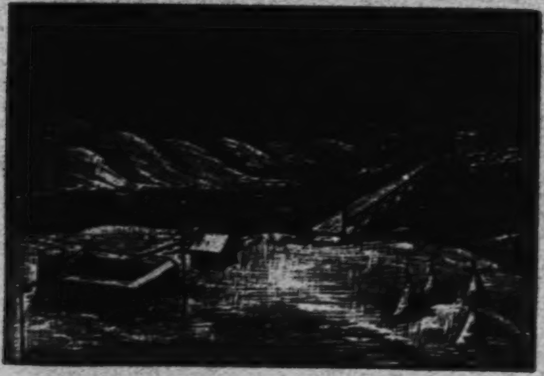
He had hardly done speaking when an order for a sergeant and several men came from headquarters, and an hour later a squad of fifteen men with shovels and axes were huddled around the cook-stove, in the adjutant's shanty, awaiting the teamsters. But four wagons could be rigged up this morning, and the teams, which consisted of mules and horses, presented a sorry aspect indeed.

We were wrapped in all our heavy clothing of wool, robes and skins, and none of us doubted that after a brisk walk of a mile, we would make the trip all right. As we passed over the road we hastily shoveled the drifts to one side to make the way passable for the wagons, and by eleven o'clock we had reached the mountains, a distance of seven miles from camp, where we soon had warm fires burning, around which we sat until the teams came up. None knew how hard we worked, until after resting for a while, and attempting to rise we found ourselves stiff and sore, and scarcely able to walk.

But no time must be lost, and we went at it and soon had our wagons loaded and were on our way to camp. My boots were nearly worn out and the buffalo overshoes and leggins which I had on were not much better. I did not know that while standing around that fire the snow had melted and soaked through and was absorbed by my heavy woolen socks, and not until after walking and running a mile or so did I realize that my feet were freezing.

If such a thing was possible the cold had increased, and now we were compelled to face the north wind and drifting snow which swept off the bluffs in blinding showers, completely hiding us from each other. The road from the mountain followed a canyon to the Platte Valley in a northern direction, and then up the valley to the west.

While descending this canyon, a thought occurred to me that a mile might be saved by taking a near cut across the low bluffs. No quicker thought of than I turned from the road and struck out on my own hook, thinking that I would surprise the boys by being in camp when they arrived.



Fort Casper.

This came near being a short cut to the other world. I had gone but a short distance when I found myself struggling waist deep in a snow bank. But I fought my way through, and after a few hundred yards of good walking I again broke through the thick crust, and this time I began to realize that my situation was a critical one.

A long time I struggled, occasionally stopping to rest, then again renewed my efforts with that desperation which the thought of death inspires, and finally, almost exhausted, I again stood on solid footing.

Looking away down in the valley I could see the four wagons with my comrades moving slowly along, and a few miles beyond them the little block-house with smoke curling up from its chimney, and such feelings that crept over me. Would I ever again see my comrades there? Why did I not follow those wagons? Then the thought of my home in the East, and the loved ones there, passed before my mind. I wondered if they would ever know my fate. Then I lifted my heart to God for deliverance—the first prayer I had uttered for years, and I felt at once that the God whom my mother had worshipped, the God whose cause my venerable father had all his life proclaimed, would certainly hear my prayer, and I seemed to take new courage and hope.

I had been pushing rapidly along, keeping pace with my thoughts. The stinging sensation in my feet had ceased and there was no suffering there.

I now came upon a bluff overlooking the road scarcely half a mile distant, and the block-house was in plain sight, but two miles distant. I saw the wagons halt there, and the men enter the doors of their comfortable quarters. I now concluded to rest for a moment, and sank down into a soft pile of snow. The sensation that passed over me here was delightful. I never had been so comfortable before in all my life. Everything was happiness, and visions and beautiful scenes flitted before my mind in rapid succession, and I saw my father, mother, sisters and brothers, all at home, kneeling around the family altar. How long I sat here I do not know, but I was suddenly aroused by something, I could not tell what. I started and looked wildly around, evidently expecting to see some one standing over me, for I thought I had heard a voice. All at once the awful fact dawned upon me. *I was freezing to death!*

With a mighty effort I arose and attempted to walk. A chill shot through my frame like a flash and I came near falling to the ground. But I was now thoroughly awake to my dreadful condition, and I began to jump and attempted to run, and in my desperation I threw my arms about my body. I now came to a spot where the snow had entirely drifted off, leaving the ground clear. I now stopped here, and was surprised by the feeling caused by my feet coming in contact with the solid ground. There was no perceptible feeling in my feet at all. From my knees down, both legs and feet seemed to be surplus, dead weights, and as they struck the ground they would come down like wooden feet and legs. I now fully realized my condition and knew that I was badly frozen, and that everything depended on my own exhertion. I walked, rolled, and tumbled down the hill, and when I reached the road I found that I was becoming deathly sick.

I was soon met by some men who had come to help me in. The men at the camp had snow-water melted, turpentine ready, and the minute I arrived they ripped leggins, boots and socks, from top to toe, and peeled them off, and my feet, which were badly frozen, were put to soak in two large camp kettles of water. And oh, the pain I experienced after the frost came out of those feet. Tongue cannot describe it. For six long weeks I laid in my bunk or hobbled on crutches, and did not have to haul any more wood that winter. But I was not the only one frozen that day. Several other men had their feet, ears, fingers and toes, badly frosted, from which they were laid up some time, and I may say in my own case now, after a lapse of seventeen years, I still suffer from the effects of that freezing.

I have stated that the scurvy had made its way into our camp, and that several men had already fallen victims to it: This was a strange disease to us and one which gave our young Surgeon no little uneasiness, for he had not the remedies at hand necessary to apply to it, and the diet upon which we were compelled to live, was only calculated to aggravate the disease.

Almost any kind of fruit, especially dried apple, would prevent it, and in many cases cures the scurvy. It first made its appearance on the gums which became inflamed and very tender. Then it would go through the entire system, the blood would become black, and the limbs would draw and become rigid and stiff. Great black spots appeared over the body and the victim would soon die.

This disease held on, and many were afflicted with it until March '66, when we succeeded in getting some wagons through from Laramie with vegetables and dried fruits, and the scurvy soon disappeared, but not until it had left a number of our boys in their graves and many more as cripples for life.

I remember that we buried two men one day, and the next morning we gathered up their bones stripped of flesh; some of them half a mile from the grave. The wolves had dug them up during the night.

From December to the latter part of March we managed to subsist somehow, but these four months formed the darkest period of our lives.

The latter part of Februarp found the telegraph line down at both ends, and for four weeks we were cut off from the outside world, as much so as if we were completely frozen up in iceburgs in the region of the North pole. About the 28th of March, while the operator and two officers sat in the telegraph office engaged in a game of cards, the instrument all at once gave several distinct ticks, and the men sprang to their feet as if another kind of a battery had opened upon them.

The news spread like a flash through the camp, and in a few moments the most anxious and excited crowd ever gathered together were assembled in the old log office. I doubt much if the first telegram ever flashed over the wires caused more excitement than did the first message received by this forlorn and dejected band of soldiers.

It announced that "1,500 Sioux Indians had just surrendered at Fort Laramie," and the best of all ordered our regiment to march to that post at the earliest possible moment.

The lame and the halt leaped for joy. The boys threw up their caps, (those that had any) and everybody joined in the demonstration of joy which followed. But we had to wait until the 3rd day of April before the weather would permit us to leave. It seemed to have a grip on the place and it held on until the last, but the time came and everything having been made ready, our mules and ponies we found in that paradise, "Jack's Valley," all right. The hair had grown out long and looked wooly, but they had greatly improved and we were agreeably surprised to find that but few of them were lost. About the first of April the sun, for the first time in many weeks, made its appearance and indicated that the cold winter was over. All the forage about the camp was loaded on the wagons, and on the third day of April, through a blinding snow storm, we took up our march, leaving the little squad of Infantry to take care of the post. The weather, although the snow continued to fall for several days, was not disagreeably cold, and although we were compelled to break a road which had not been traveled for several months, we made good time, and in the course of a week we arrived at Fort Laramie. Our poor darkey, Cal, had been severely afflicted with scurvy and we had to lift him in and out of the wagon. He was drawn up into a ball, and could have been rolled around over the ground without straightening a joint or causing a muscle to relax.

Sure enough here we found all the bloody Sioux of the neighborhood of the Laramie and North Platte rivers.

The cold had starved and frozen them out, and they had collected together within fifty miles of Laramie, and then marched to that place and surrendered. It was about the first of March, when on crawling out of their quarters the troops at Laramie were considerably surprised at seeing a white blanket flying at the top of a pole on one of the neighboring bluffs, and around it a dozen sorry looking Indians of both sex. A detachment of cavalry was sent out to see who they were and what they wanted, and soon returned bringing them to camp.

"Standing Elk" headed the list of chiefs and was in command. They were taken to the commander's office where a council was held, and each one made a speech. "Standing Elk" made the opening address, which was about as follows:

"I come many miles to make peace with my white brother. We have suffered much. The white man has dogged my tracks for many moons. The white man has slain my young men and outraged my spuaws, my ponies are the white soldier's war horses. He rides them to battle with my warriors. The white men fight well, they are brave, but the red men can't live without meat. The white soldier has killed all his buffalo, antelope and deer. None are left for us to kill. To show the white brother we want peace, I have brought all my people with me, and many of my old women and little papooses have frozen to death on the way.

"Last Fall the white soldier pulled down our dead from their last resting place, and robbed them of all their goods, and left their bodies food for wolves. This alone excited my young men and called for revenge, but we want peace now, and as for the train we captured last summer we will return to the white trader as many of his mules and ponies as we have left, but for the men we killed with that train they are gone—we cannot bring them back, but will mourn with their friends.

"My people are on Raw Hide creek, I want the soldiers to bring them in. They are starving."

"Standing Elk" sat down, and each of the other minor chiefs spoke, but had to have an interpreter. "Elk" spoke pretty good English and I believe could sign his name and read a little.

Colonel Manidier was deeply affected, and a treaty was drawn up and duly signed. Then a company of cavalry went over and marched the whole fifteen hundred of them in.

There nevtr was such a sorry sight before. Every preparation was made for their reception while the company was gone. Meat and beans were cooked by the ton, coffee made by the barrel, and cooked with wood hauled ninety miles. Blankets and other clothing was dragged from the quartermaster department, where we had been informed that not a particle of clothing remained, and when the Indians arrived in the evening they found a grand feast awaiting them. "Grub" was never stored away faster than at that grand supper on the parade grounds at Laramie.

They gave up their fire arms, but were allowed to retain their bows and arrows. All the stolen stock in their possession was turned over to the Government, and they went into camp along the two streams mentioned.

The military force at Laramie was not very strong, and great fears were entertained that the Indians might be tempted by the weakness of the garrison and the valuable property which could be captured to prove treacherous and violate their treaty as they had done many times before. Our arrival relieved the commandant of further fears, and we were put to camp on the Platte, right in the heart of the Indian camp to hold them level.

All went well for a week. Nothing happened to mar the peace of either the white or red men. We had been trading together, and in many instances became personally acquainted with our late foe. An agency had been established a few miles down the creek where "Standing Elk" and his five hundred young warriors—his body guard—camped. Four of us mounted our ponies one day and concluded to go down there and see "the boys." The party consisted of Lieutenants Krouse and Brazie, Bunton and myself.

All would have doubtless went well had we not stopped at the "Five Mile Branch." But we tarried there too long, and Bunton took too much "Red Jacket." This "Red Jacket" got us into trouble with the redskins, and we made a narrow escape.

I wish I could describe the scene in this ranch. It was a long log house with dirt roof. Inside were eight gambling tables around which were seated rough men of all nations, all engaged in playing poker, or standing along the bar where five bar keepers were kept constantly at work.

"Who is that young, good looking, man at that end of the table—the one in the fancy buckskin shirt," we asked of a "clerk."

"That is 'Green River,' and the man at the same table is 'Old Brigger the Trapper.' "Greeny' has won $4,000 off of 'Brig,' and he is trying to rake it back, but he won't make it. There ain't a man in these parts as ken wax it to that road agent."

On each table are large piles of money. Greenbacks, gold and silver coin, nuggets and dust, and revolvers and bowie knives form a conspicuous feature in the games.

CHAPTER XI.

We Call on Standing Elk—And Get Into Trouble—Too Much "Red Jacket"—Bunton has a Little Unpleasantness with a Red Brother which Brings Down all the Horde Upon Us—We Escape by Running the Gauntlet—We are Ordered to "The States"—Flinn Takes in Two "Stags" and is Himself Taken In—He Paints His Captured Stock In Water Colors—But the Indian "Waters the Stock" and it Won't Stand the Wash—Down the Republican River—Again at Fort Leavenworth—Mustered Out—Reception at Wheeling—Grand Finale—The Tall.

We mounted our ponies and left the ranche mentioned in the last chapter, and struck out for the "Standing Elk Agency." Bunton was pretty full and ready for any emergency, and at the Indian camp he found it.

We found the ford a mile above the camp and forced our unwilling bronchos into the rapid waters up to the saddle skirts.

Reaching the opposite bank we charged on a double quick and came to a halt in the heart of the village, almost tearing down several lodges.

We saw at once that the young bucks did not approve of our unceremonious entrance, for they all sprang to their feet at once and commenced an excited chattering, hissing and grunting among themselves, and giving unmistakable evidence of their anger by signs and gestures which we, who were sober, understood meant "business."

Bunton, although pretty drunk, saw it, and at once assumed a defiant and pugilistic attitude. We at once asked for Standing Elk, and found he was not at home, and in addition to this information received an order from a stout young gentleman, decorated in æsthetic colors to "puck-a-chee!" which we understood to mean "Leave here!" But we didn't leave; at least just then, but we did conclude to move a short time afterwards, and that, too, on a forced march, with about a hundred yelling bucks in our rear.

We spent a few moments visiting around among the tepees, trying to make friends of wild beasts, but soon found our friendly advances were repulsed on every hand, and to add to the fires already fanned into a flame, Bunton wanted to fight every Indian who manifested any hesitancy in shaking hands and giving a hearty response to his "How! How!" The crowd of warriors had by this time collected in little squads, all in a fever of excitement, talking rapidly and shooting fiery glances at us as we passed boldly among them. The Agency building stood near the camp, and we soon wandered thither. We had hitched our ponies near the shanty, and Brazie and myself fully realising the danger of our situation, and knowing what would likely soon occur, untied our ponies and were standing near the door of the agency.

A large naked warrior stood at the entrance armed with a sabre, which had been whetted to an edge as sharp as a razor, from heel to point. The Indians were drawing their rations of provisions and calico, and it was the guard's duty to see that but a limited number entered at once. Krouse was a man who was slow to see danger, but when he did see it could meet it as boldly as any person living.

The crowd of excited warriors gathered in a solid mass near the agency, and a young chief had just commenced to address them when the crisis came. Bunton had for some moments been engaged in a parley with the guard over the possession of his sabre. He wanted to see it, and show Mr. Indian how to "right and left cut," but the vigilant guard could not be induced to give it up peaceably.

All this had been noticed by the other Indians, which increased their anger. Bunton finally succeeded in getting hold of the hilt, and in drawing the sharp blade through the Indian's hand, cutting his fingers enough to draw considerable blood.

This was enough. With the first drop of blood a great war whoop went up by the guard, which was taken up by all the other redskins, and in an instant the air was rent by the deafening shouts of several hundred painted warriors.

"Then we started. Pell mell up the river we went."

At this instant Standing Elk came dashing down the river, his pony covered with foam, and he, also, joined in the chorus of deafening whoops. He had been drinking "fire-water" and was ready for blood.

There was no time to be lost. Krouse had by this time taken refuge in the log house, while Bunton stood for one whole moment surrounded by the excited and bloodthirsty crowd, his sabre drawn back at arm's length and his Remington revolver clinched tightly in the other hand. Thus they stood at bay, when the Agent appeared, and in their own language, began to address them. But he only succeeded in effecting a delay of hostilities, during which we succeeded in getting Bunton on his pony and out of the crowd.

Then we started. Pell-mell up the river we went, followed by the exasperated mob, some on foot, others on barebacked ponies, and all armed with bows and arrows, which they let fly at us as we retreated, but their arrows, luckily, fell short, and only served to push us along.

For two miles we were chased, and the pursuit only ended when we crossed the river in the neighborhood of the ranche and were joined by a detachment of troops who were luckily in the vicinity. We did not fire a shot, for we well knew that we were the aggressors, and that we would do well to escape punishment at headquarters.

When we reached the river at the place where we forded, Bunton was clinging to the back of his saddle, out of which he had bounced, and his long legs were dangling in the neighborhood of the pony's heels.

He got a thorough ducking in crossing the river, and it is not necessary for me to say, was almost sober when we came to a halt near the ranche.

Krouse barred the door when the agent went out, and thus saved himself from the bloodthirsty Indians, whom the agent succeeded in quieting after much persuasion and many threats of bringing the "big White Chief and his soldiers down from the fort."

We learned from this circumstance that it was a good thing to have an ex-Judge Advocate and a Commissioned Officer along when there was any devilment on hand, for they succeeded nicely in squashing the matter, and although old Elk called long and loud for our punishment, we never got it.

And now I am about to close this narrative, and in order to do so, must take a long stride and fetch up at Fort Leavenworth again. It was on the 23d day of April, 1866, when we gladly bid farewell to Laramie, and in a blinding snow storm turned our faces eastward.

There is a little incident which has just occurred to my mind which I must relate before we leave the North Platte.

At Laramie a good many ponies and mules belonging to the Sioux were ranging around our camp continually, and among these was a splendid black pony with one white leg and a "blazed" face of the same snowy whiteness, and also a mule, the constant companion of the black horse. Our Irish friend, Flinn, had one eye to business and the other on said pony and mule. He easily secured a partner in his enterprise, for a "wee bit ov a speculation," as he termed it, and together they laid their plans to capture the aforesaid "strays."

The night before our start Flinn succeeded in lassooing both, and long before day he and his confederate were well on their way toward our first camping place below Laramie. Strange to say, the pony had not been shaved, that is, his mane had not been "roached," and his tail "bushed," as were nearly all Indian ponies, but Flinn had a pair of shears and he knew well how to use them, and before the sun went down that day his mane and tail were beautifully shaved. This did not entirely satisfy Flinn, for there was the white leg and blaze face. But "necessity is the mother of invention," and something must be done with those white spots. Flinn didn't have to study long, but procuring some charred wood from an old camping place, he soon had that face and leg as black as any part of the pony's body.

Of course none of us knew the pony when he came up, and many questions were asked Flinn. His captain wanted to know where he had secured so fine an animal. "Sure an' I bought him uv the bloody Frinchman at the ranche, fur $75. An' maby ye'll be wantin' to ax me where I sakured the funds, seein' I had no money uv me own. But ye have no business to be pryin' into honest payples' affairs, so ye havn't." And this answer seemed to settle the captain.

So matters went on all right. The mule disappeared after we had passed a west bound wagon train, near Chimney Rock, and Flinn seemed to be flush. But he held on to the black pony until we reached Willow Springs. Here Flinn came to grief.

We had hardly settled in camp when the telegraph operator handed our commander a dispatch, asking him to lay over until an officer and a Sioux Indian could overtake us and search our camp for lost stock.

Of course we could not tell what the delay was for, but we guessed its nature. Flinn was perfectly serene and happy. His suspicions were not in the least aroused.

In the afternoon an officer and a stout young Indian came up, and after a few moments' talk with the major proceeded to search the herd for the pony and mule. Of course the mule could not be found, but Mr. Indian soon concluded that the black pony with the freshly shaven tail and mane, bore some resemblance to his lost pony. But he passed him several times before he concluded to investigate closely.

We were all observing the search closely, and there never was a more nervous and uncomfortable man in the world than was Flinn during those few brief moments. Finally the Indian caught the rope which was dragging on the ground and led the pony to the creek.

"Sure an' what's the bludy Injun goin' to do now?"

"Injun give pony heep water; pony heep dry," grunted the Indian in reply, as they came to the water's edge.

"Mr. Injun, I say, ye can't come any uv yer pesky tricks on me, an' so ye can't. If the truth was known ye've kilt an' skun mony a poor white man, an' ye ought to die the dith uv a schnake this minit, an' so ye ought. Stop that, ye bludy hound; w'at ye throwin' wather in the nose ov me pony fur?" And as Flinn said this he made a dash down the bank for the noble red man, and had he not been prevented he would have pushed him headlong into the water. But the Indian went on, and in a few moments that water was black as night and the pony's face and leg as white as snow.

"Whooe! White man much sharp—paint face black—no fool Injun," and he led his pony up the bank with an air of triumph.

"Sure an' the bludy Frinchman has me money an' the thavin' Sioux has me horse. But I'll get aven wid thim whin I crass the plains agin (which, be dad, wont happen in the next hundred years,") remarked Flinn, with a chuckle, as he marched off to camp, while the whole command set up a shout and laugh at his bad luck. This seemed to settle Flinn, for he did not engage in any more "enterprises" while in the service.

Our march back across the plains was marked by many adventures and incidents which I can not take time to mention. We made good time, and when we reached Julesburg we found a city of 3,000 inhabitants, which had but three weeks' growth. There was but one house in the town and that not finished.

Lots and streets were marked by "end gates" of wagons stuck in the ground, numbered and lettered with chalk. Whisky was sold from every wagon, and a billiard table and bar occupied the half-finished house.

The inhabitants of this mushroom town had followed the surveyors of the Union Pacific Railroad, who had stopped here and were locating a bridge over the Platte river. They concluded this was the place for a large city, so they squatted and commenced business on a grand scale. The "New Julesburg" was located one mile below the old town, and has since grown to be quite a "City of the Plains."

In course of time we reached Kansas, and our eyes feasted on the beauties of early springtime. Her prairies were rich in green grass and vast fields of wheat spread out before us like beautiful lakes. Our boys declared that this was the paradise of the world, and almost every man formed a resolution to come back as soon as mustered out and settle on some of the unclaimed lands through which we passed. At Blue river a large portion of our command left the road and went over onto the Republican river, down which they followed to Fort Riley, in Kansas. They asserted, when they joined us again, that the "half had not been told." Each of these men selected a claim, intending to return from Levenworth, but had to go to Wheeling. Many of them did go back, and to-day are enjoying comfortable homes in the Republican valley. At Leavenworth we turned over our little friends, the ponies, amidst much sorrow, for we had formed an attachment for them which was hard to break off.

A few days after our arrival here, we were mustered out and ordered to Wheeling, W. Va., to receive our pay, and also a Grand Reception, which the people of West Virginia were desirous of giving us in appreciation of our long and honerable service in the army.

And now let us review, briefly, the history of the old 6th West Virginia Cavalry.

As I have said, it was composed of the old 2nd and 3d West Virginia Infantry. These regiments were organized on the 1st day of July, 1861, and after serving their time nearly out, re-enlisted as the 5th and 6th West Virginia Cavalry regiments, and were soon after consolidated and called the 6th West Virginia Cavalry.

From the time of enlistment, in 1861, until mustered out of service, in 1866, the men of this regiment participated in the following battles and raids:

Elk Water, September 12, 13 and 14, 1861; Cheat Mountain, December 13, 1861; Allegheney Summit, December 15, 1861; Montery, April 2, 1862; Montgomerey, April 8, 1862; Bull Pasture Mountain, May 8, 1862; Cross Keys, June 8, 1862; Port Republic, June 9, 1862; Strasburg, June 20, 1862; Cedar Mountain, August 14, 1862; Kelley's Ford, August 21 and 22, 1862; Lee's Springs, August 23, 1862; Waterloo Bridge, August 25, 1862; Bull Run, August 29 and 30, 1862; Droop Mountain, September 6, 1862; Beverly, April 28, 1863; Buckhannon, April 26, 1863; Beverly, May 23, 1863; Rocky Gap, August 26 and 27, 1863; Salem Raid, December 8 to 27, 1863; Cloyd Mountain, May 10, 1864; Lynchburg Raid, June 8 to July 5, 1864; New

Creek November 28, 1864; Sayler's Run, April 3, 1865; California Crossing, August 30, 1865.

The above list does not include a large number of skirmishes of no little importance, such as Medly Farm, Moorefield, Mechanics Gap, Petersburg, &c., &c.

During the service of the regiment there were—

Killed in action, 301; Died of wounds, 214; Discharged by reason of wounds, 233; Died of disease, 137. Total, 885.

At the battle of New Creek, November 28, '64, 485 officers and men were captured and confined in Libby prison, in Richmond, and in the prison pens at Danville, Va., and did not re-join the regiment until late in March, '65, which accounts for the command not participating more actively in the operations around Richmond which culminated in the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia, at Appomattox.

We are now in Wheeling, and the boys go about the streets with sad faces—and at the thought of soon parting, no more to meet on earth. But there is also joy in the hearts—hearts which had not felt joy for many years. Joy at the thought of soon meeting and embracing father, mother, sister, brother, dear wife and little loved ones, and perhaps a sweetheart was uppermost in the minds of some of the boys. But be that as it may, we soon gave each other the parting hand and went forth into the world bearing with us kindly feelings towards each other—feelings which still have a place in our hearts, although we cannot see each other, we are still remembered kindly.

And now, where are you boys? Alas! many, whose thread of life was strained and weakened by exposure and hardships, have long since gone down to early graves.

Others are passing through life maimed and perhaps poor, and it may be destitute, battling with the cold world for a scanty living.

Others doubtless have grown fat on the world's goods and are Nabobs among men of influence and position. Be our position and circumstances in life as they may, let us strive to obey the orders of the Great Commander above, and when the final blast of the trumpet shall sound, may we all once more "fall in" and each one respond to his name, when the "Roll is called" up yonder. There, let us strive to meet again, never to be "mustered out."

The Reception at the McClure House was one of the grandest affairs ever held in Wheeling. Parting speeches were made by officers and privates, and tears glistened in the eyes and ran down over sun-browned cheeks which had not felt a tear for many years before. It was here the parting scene took place and none of us can ever forget it; nor do we care to forget how tender we felt towards each other when we looked each other in the face for the last time.